3-18-2019

Foucauldian Dynamics in the Formation of a Fifth Grade Writing Culture

Ashley Renee Watson
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, lsueducator05@gmail.com

FOUCAULDIAN DYNAMICS IN THE FORMATION OF A FIFTH GRADE WRITING CULTURE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agriculture and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Education

by
Ashley Renee Watson
B.S., Louisiana State University, 2004
M.Ed., Louisiana State University, 2005
Ed.S., Louisiana State University, 2009
May 2019

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at a student writing culture in a fifth grade English language arts classroom through the lens of Foucauldian power dynamics to examine the power relationships in the classroom and curriculum. The research questions were: 1) What is the nature of a writing culture in a fifth-grade writing classroom? 2) What are students' perceptions of writing in a fifth grade ELA classroom? The methodology for the study was case study research.

The research took place during the 2017-2018 school year at Southeast Elementary School in Lancaster County in the southeastern part of the United States. Data was collected from my English language arts classroom and included: student writing, student journals, student interviews, student questionnaire, anecdotal notes, teacher lesson plans, intervention plans, reflective journals, grant memos, faculty meeting memos, testing memos and documents, planning notes, and meeting notes. Triangulation of data, coding, and member checking determined themes and answered the research questions. Findings included power dynamics within the writing curriculum, student resistance and challenges in writing, and dissonance in student perceptions of writing.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Rationale

The research questions for this study were: 1) What is the nature of a writing culture in a fifth-grade writing classroom? 2) What are students' perceptions of writing in a fifth grade ELA classroom? The purpose of this study was to understand the ways that writing culture developed in a fifth grade English language arts classroom. A body of literature exists on the connections between reading and writing, writing as a tool to developing logic, creativity in writing, and writing as a bridge to understanding. Previous studies have canvassed areas such as teacher factors that impact student writing success, student factors impacting writing success, components of an effective writing curriculum, the dissonance between a teacher's beliefs and writing instruction, and helping students find their voice through writing. Little research has been done on these elements in classrooms after the implementation of Common Core and other writing requirements. Little is known about the impact of these changes and on the intersection of all of these factors on students and their perception of writing. This study sought to understand how these factors combine to influence the development of a writing culture. This study was significant in that it was situated at the intersection between the realm of writing and its potential to empower students. The study also studied student's self-efficacy as writers and how the power dynamics in the classroom and curriculum shaped their understanding.

Writing holds a unique place in the curriculum. It is a combination of skills (the ability to write a complete sentence, the ability to write a complete paragraph, basic knowledge of grammar, concepts (narrative writing, expository writing), and it is a creative, iterative process. It is situated in the English language arts curriculum, but to be done well, it should be done across the curriculum. However, recent curricular reform has attempted to confine writing down

to a measurable objective. This attempt at quantification places teachers and students in a unique position. How does a teacher guide students through the complexities of the writing process with a finite and specific rubric as a guide? As the increasing stringency of writing requirements is new in the field of education, little current research exists regarding its impact on students' perceptions of writing and its impact on writing culture. This study endeavored to bridge the gap.

Background of the Proposed Study

My interest in researching fifth grade writing curriculum emerged from my thirteen years of teaching experience. I have taught second, third, fourth, and fifth grade, however, the majority of my teaching experience has been with fifth. My experiences have provided me with a good understanding of how the writing curriculum and expectations advance and change. As I taught English language arts to various groups of fifth grade students, I saw a dissonance between the curriculum, the goals I had for my students as writers, and the way I delivered instruction. Researchers need to ask what impact these changes have on the students, on the ways they learn, and on their perceptions of their learning. This research study sought to discover what impact writing can have on empowering students who were affected by a natural disaster and how students viewed themselves as writers.

Writing curriculum has changed greatly since 2013. Instead of a one sentence writing prompt, students are now asked to respond to a prompt that is often a paragraph in length. Students do not write persuasive essays on a topic of choice or a creative writing piece. Depending upon grade level they receive two to three passages to read and then must read the prompt and respond in detail. They are expected to write using standard grammar conventions, including text-based evidence, and following all parts of the prompt.

The rubric takes up an entire typed page and takes weeks to explain and to teach to students. I began to ask myself what I was doing. How were my students responding to this type of instruction? How was I responding to it? What messages was I sending? As the restrictions tightened, I felt more powerless in my own profession, and I witnessed the frustrations of my students as they struggled with the new format and requirements.

Impact of a Natural Disaster

The student participants in this study were impacted by a thousand-year flood. On August 12, 2016, Lancaster County and the surrounding areas were inundated with 21 inches of rain in under 12 hours. This rainfall caused areas that had never flooded and were out of the five-hundred-year flood plain to take on water. There was no notice and many residents awoke to water in their homes. They were forced to wade in the water and evacuate with only what they could carry. Many residents were rescued by teams of civilians and residents from surrounding counties who came to rescue complete strangers. Lancaster County was the hardest hit with eighty percent of homes and ninety percent of businesses experiencing flood damage.

At the time of this study, Southeast was located on a temporary campus on the property of another elementary school campus. While it was uncertain whether these previous events would impact the writing culture of the classroom, it bears mentioning as disasters have broad reach. Felix, Pariva, and Whitney (2013) were research students visiting Chile in the wake of a massive earthquake. While the researchers did not intend to study the impact of this disaster, they found some common themes. The local people and business owners frequently mentioned how the disaster made people 'shy away' from the area and how the people of Chile experienced an occupational transition that they did not choose. The researchers discussed how natural disaster can be stigmatizing.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was poststructuralism and Foucauldian power dynamics. Foucault (1980, 1995) questioned the underlying assumptions of our society and our language. Foucault spoke to power's impact on society as a whole. The "mentally ill", criminals, the homeless, homosexuals, Protestants, Catholics, and people of numerous other classifications have been marginalized through periods of history. Foucault spoke out against our conceptions of constructs such as mental illness. He believed that the people who were punished by the "reigning power" were those who were of the most threat to that power system.

In *Crime and Punishment*, Foucault (1995) claimed that crimes that were the most threatening to the ruling authority were the most harshly punished. He discussed the school in particular as an instrument of societal power. In recent years with sweeping curriculum mandates, this claim seems relevant. While teachers are part of the power structure of a school, they are not the authors of the system or the rules that govern them. Through a Foucauldian lens, my students were disempowered by an imposed writing curriculum prior to the flood prior to the flood. Instead of teaching them to find their voice, the curriculum switched to telling students with which voice they were to speak. Post-flood, the dynamics changed once again (Foucault, 1995).

Writing is inherently situated in the realm of language. In *Power/Knowledge,* Foucault (1980) examined the power structures embedded both in language and in the unspoken. Discourse goes beyond language; it is part of how we see our world. For the students in this study, their perceptions of the world shifted. Foucault (1980) focused on the relationship between knowledge and power. He considered "apparatus" to be the system that allowed power to be instituted. This study sought to understand the apparatus that is in place for the students in

a fifth grade English language arts classroom. The study also sought to understand how students navigated through this space and how writing influenced the power dynamic in the classroom.

Lagemann (2000) cited multiple times that teachers were seldom considered in the very professionalization of their own field. The remnants of this power dynamic echoed through the current school system. This power dynamic was explored in this study and earned consideration in studying the dynamics of the writing curriculum.

School does not exist in isolation. The political environment and public opinions on education are aspects of power dynamic that influence schooling. Schools and teachers interpret curriculum taught to students, but it is written on the county level and must meet state requirements. The very name of our curriculum was changed from "Common Core" due to nationwide parent protests, though the standards remained the same. In the case of Southeast, a natural disaster further disempowered many employees through the loss of their homes, the school, and its students. This study sought to understand the dynamics that influenced a single classroom.

Relevant Literature

While the definition of literacy has shifted, literacy has remained as one of the core goals of schooling. I used Street's (2003) definition of literacy for this study:

> What has come to be termed the "New Literacy Studies" (NLS) (Gee, 1991; Street,1996) represents a new tradition in considering the nature of literacy, focusing not so much on acquisition of skills, as in dominant approaches, but rather on what it means to think of literacy as a social practice (p. 77).

This entails the recognition of multiple literacies, varying according to time and space, but also contested in relations of power. NLS, takes nothing for granted with respect to literacy and the social practices with which it becomes associated, problematizing what counts as literacy at any

time and place and asking "whose literacies" are dominant, and whose are marginalized or resistant. (Street, 2003) Literacy maintains its basic definition but takes on a new role in the current arena of accountability and high stakes testing. While in the past, writing was something only in later elementary grades, it is now considered foundational. The development of writing is typically taught with the development of reading starting in kindergarten. Wagner, Venezky, and Street (1999) found that, "Writing is closely connected to, fosters or even enforces the development of logic, the distinction of myth from history, the elaboration of bureaucracy, the shift from 'little communities' to complex cultures" (p. 35). They argued that literacy is social, not fixed. The technological world seems to be proving this a fact. Our definition of literacy now must include the navigation through the vast, ever-growing world of information.

Vygotsky (1962) viewed writing as a socially, mediated, recursive process. Wood and Dickinson (2000) found that teacher roles consistent with promoting literacy are being a reflective practitioner, being a collaborator, a monitor, and actively mentoring students. Researchers speak to the difficulties for teachers to meet all of these roles and fulfill the "rigorous" standards in place. Their research also indicated that schools need a school-wide vision and commitment to literacy. Teachers need shared goals and definitions of what it is to be literate.

Andrews (2008) stated that to effectively teach writing, the teacher must be able to write, students need to respond to one another's writing, the teacher should write alongside students, research should be applied to instruction, and the stages of the writing process should be mapped and practiced. Gambrell, Dromsky, and Mazzoini (2000) told us that in early adolescence, students must begin referencing themselves to their peers. It is also at this stage that collaboration becomes more important. Classrooms that help students develop intrinsic

motivation allow students to seek answers to questions, communicate ideas, debate, and grow as listeners, writers, and learners.

Liner and Butler (2000) emphasized the importance of giving students their own voices. The authors urged the use of writing workshops and emphasized student choice, ample writing time, and student responsibility. Wood and Nichols (2000) emphasized daily writing as instrumental in helping at risk students. They wrote, "There is a reciprocal relationship between reading and writing" (p. 244) and emphasized daily time to practice these skills.

Writing is multifaceted. Good writing curriculum must contain many components. Writing instruction should include sustained writing time, student-teacher conferences to discuss writing, peer conferences among students, student choice, time for students to write daily, and writing workshops (Gambrell, Dromsky, & Mazzoni, 2000; Grainger, Goouch, & Lambirth, 2005; Liner & Butler, 2000; Routman, 1996; Wood & Dickinson, 2000; Wood & Nichols, 2000;). For students to become successful writers, the school should have a school wide vision and a commitment to literacy. Students need to develop the intrinsic motivation to write, which is developed through viewing writing as a creative process, viewing literacy as a social practice, self-directed working time, student choice, giving some control to the learners, and open-ended assignments. Writing should be viewed as a reflective and recursive process. The teachers' role in writing instruction varies based on in what part of the process the students are engaged and the maturity students possess as writers. Teachers should be reflective practitioners, collaborators with students, collaborators with coworkers, active mentors, and should engage in writing themselves.

Writing Efficacy

Much of the research on writing centers on teacher factors and student factors that determine efficacy of writing instruction. Teacher factors include teacher's perceptions about writing, teacher's perceptions of themselves as writers, and teacher training. (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Frawley, 2014; Graham, 2012; Icy, 2013; Irwin & Knodle, 2008; McCarthey, 2014). Student factors include student literacy, student reading level, students' opportunities to write at home and school, and student attitude towards writing, etc. (Brown, Morrell, & Rowlands, 2011; Burke, 2014; Hamilton, 2011; Kent, Wanzek, Petscher, Otaiba, & Kim, 2014; VanHartingsveld, 2013). In general, a teacher's training, positive attitude toward writing and positive attitude towards themselves as writers impact student writing. (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Corkett, 2011). For student factors, higher reading level, literate environments, increased time for writing, and a positive attitude toward writing also impact student writing and student writing success. (Al-Bataineh, Holems, Jerich, & Williams, 2010). The focus of these studies was global but did not address the teacher navigating a constantly shifting curriculum. The students in many of these studies were in what universally would have been considered basic writing curriculum (creative writing, the editing process) only a few years ago. What this researcher hoped to gain from this case study was an in depth look at these new spaces within curriculum and how they impact student writing efficacy and student writing culture.

Context of the Proposed Study

The original setting for the proposed study was Southeast Elementary School in mid-city Dunmore in Lancaster County. The school was surrounded by small businesses and small neighborhoods. A massive thousand-year flood sent seven feet of water surging through the

campus. As a result, the teachers and students at Southeast Elementary were relocated to another campus that was located in a wooded area near many growing subdivisions.

Southeast was a Title I elementary school. To qualify as a Title I school, the school had to have 40% of the student body qualified for free or reduced lunch. Before the flood, Southeast Elementary had 80% of students qualified for free or reduced lunch. Post-flood, one hundred percent of students qualified.

Research Approach

According to Stake (1995), a case researcher's roles include researcher as teacher, as advocate, as evaluator, as biographer, as participant observer, as interviewer, as counselor, and as interpreter. As the teacher, participant, and researcher in this study, my role was participant observer. Stake (1995) asserted, "The intention of research is to inform, to sophisticate, to assist the increase of competence and maturity, to socialize, and to liberate. These are also the responsibilities of the teacher" (p. 92).

I adopted both an emic and etic perspective in my classrooms. An emic perspective is an insider role in the classroom. Teachers are part of their classroom environment and culture and an everyday participant in the way it is run. An etic perspective is an outsider perspective. They are by nature insiders, but they are outsiders in terms of student tasks and culture. Teachers naturally modify student behavior by their presence.

The Participants

The students at Southeast Elementary School were largely qualified as low income before the flood. Southeast is a Title I elementary school. Sixty-two percent of the students at Southeast are Caucasian, 20% were Hispanic, 17%were African American, and 2% of the student population was Asian. Most of the Hispanic students at the school were ESL (English as

a Second Language). I did not include ESL students as my research participants to eliminate the issue of language acquisition. My participants included an African American female, two white females, one African American male, one male of mixed ethnicities, and a white male.

Methodological Considerations

Data Collection

The methodology for this research study was instrumental case study. The researcher thought qualitative research, in general, and case study, specifically, were the best methodological approaches for this study. Creswell (2014) indicated that qualitative study works best when dealing with a natural setting. The students in this proposed case study were in a classroom setting. While they were not at their home school, the setting was familiar. Creswell (2014) also cited the importance of the researcher as a key instrument.

Creswell (2014) stated, "Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants. They may use protocol, but the researchers are the ones who actually gather the information" (p.185). My role as the teacher in the classroom made researcher participation a certainty.

Another aspect of qualitative research is multiple forms of data. The forms of data used in this study included student writing, student journals, student interviews, student questionnaire, anecdotal notes, teacher lesson plans, intervention plans, reflective journals, grant memos, faculty meeting memos, testing memos and documents, planning notes, and meeting notes.

Creswell (2013) referred to inductive and deductive data analysis to work back and forth through the data to build themes. Coding data was an important aspect of data analysis for this study (Stake, 1995). Creswell (2014) mentioned participant meanings, emergent design, reflexivity, and holistic account. One of my research questions was, "What is the nature of a

writing culture in a fifth grade English language arts classroom?" One of the key components of the research involved participants' making meaning. I did not know what patterns would emerge from the experiences of the participants, thus the design of this study was emergent.

Reflexivity was a part of this research study. As both the researcher and the classroom teacher, I reflected on my personal background and conceptions and also on my teacher practice and its vulnerabilities and failings. This study was a holistic view both of a classroom, and of the ways changes in the writing curriculum have impacted classroom culture and student perceptions in writing. (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009)

Creswell (2013) asserted, "Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system... over time through detailed, in depth data collection" (p. 182). In this research study, the classroom was viewed holistically as a single case. Classrooms have often been referred to as their own entity. Each classroom has its own rules, procedures, dynamics, and even its own personality. The teacher is part of establishing the microcosm that is the classroom. It is its own solar system set within the larger galaxy that is the school. There are enough dynamics in a single classroom setting to make multiple data sources a necessity in understanding the dynamics of that class.

Data collection for this study took place during the 2017-2018 school year. Data sources are listed in Table 3.1. Student semi-structured interviews were conducted during regular school hours. Students could participate or decline being interviewed. Interviews were recorded and transcribed to word documents.

As part of standard English language arts instruction, students participated in and completed writing tasks at least three writing tasks with a variety of purposes. Students completed writing samples during the normal English language arts period. Students who

received modifications, such as extended time, as determined by their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) received additional writing time throughout the school day. Students also participated in journal writing on a variety of topics as part of their standard English language arts instruction. During the semester of this study, students wrote in their journals twice a week. These documents were part of normal classroom management and procedure and included teacher notes of varying of forms and purposes. Student journals and writing assignments included teacher notes of encouragement and coaching them to do hone some of their writing skills. Documentation was kept on any parent-teacher conferences held at school or by phone. The teacher held student writing conferences as needed throughout the writing process. Notes were taken in a teacher notebook during these writing conferences. Other standard teacher documentation was kept during the study time.

The teacher kept a journal throughout the 2017-2018 school year. The topics canvased in the journal varied based on day-to-day classroom occurrences. Besides the journal, the teacher kept anecdotal notes on student writing progress, hindrances, and other pertinent classroom and school incidents.

In the course of daily instruction, the teacher encountered and created curriculum-based documents. These documents determined what type of instruction students received and on what their lessons focus. Curriculum documents included English language arts unit plans, teacher lesson plans, teacher written tests and assessments, assessments, and required benchmark or unit tests. During the study, the teacher was required to attend grade level meetings, faculty meetings, and professional development workshops. Handouts or materials given out during this time period were collected.

Where the roles of the researcher are so entwined with the roles of an educator, it is important to ensure methods of data analysis are valid. To ensure ethical considerations were met, an application was submitted to the Institutional Review Board. The application consisted of a description of the study, the participants, and sample interview questions. Students, administrators, and parents received and signed informed consent forms. The selected student participated in activities that were part of a balanced English language arts curriculum. There was minimal or no risk to these participants; participation was voluntary and did not impact their grades.

Administrative staff was informed of research protocol. Precautions such as pseudonyms for school, county, and participants were taken to protect the anonymity of the participants. Data was stored in a filing cabinet in a locked room. To ensure validity in this study, the researcher triangulated data.

Analysis of Data

Creswell (2013) informed us, "The processes of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process. They are interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project" (p. 182). During this study, interviews were collected using audio recording and were transcribed into Word documents. As the researcher, I took memos as the interview process proceeded. While some questions were preplanned, I asked other questions based on the responses of the participants. Other documents such as teacher notes, handouts, student writing samples, and curricular materials included notes as part of the planning and instructional process. Huberman and Miles (1994) emphasized the importance of writing marginal notes, drafting summaries of field notes, and noting relationships among categories.

This process was followed diligently during date collection to ensure that impressions gathered in the field are not lost.

Stake (1995) identified four types of data analysis in case study research: categorical aggregation, direct interpretation, patterns, and naturalistic generalizations. Categorical aggregation involves collecting and seeking data in the hopes of relevant issues emerging. I collected multiple forms of data (teacher lesson plans, anecdotal notes, student interviews, teacher journal, intervention lesson plans, student journals, student writing samples, faculty memorandums, and curriculum documents) and searched for themes from this body of information. Direct interpretation involves the case study researcher looking at a single instance and drawing meaning from it. It is impossible to predict what type of incident that will emerge during a research project, however, such an incident did occur during this study that I have detailed in Chapter 4 data analysis.

Stake (1995) wrote that patterns typically emerge in the stages of a qualitative research study. After “winnowing” the data, I assigned codes and In Vivo codes (codes developed by the language of the participants) to analyze and categorize the data. Creswell (2013) stated that this stage, "involves organizing the data, conducting a preliminary read-through of the data base, coding, and organizing themes, representing data, and forming an interpretation of them" (p. 179). Preliminary processes for developing categories involved honing in on the teacher's previous knowledge of students and classroom procedures and events. Preliminary codes/categories that the researcher expected to emerge included student references to the flood in the course of normal classroom instruction, atypical classroom behavior, changes in student living situations (as they moved back into their homes, or they found their homes are not

habitable), and student verbal response to highly scripted assignments. It was probable that not all of these categories would emerge.

After assigning codes and identifying emerging patterns, Stake (1995) indicated that naturalistic generalizations are the next step. This process involves developing themes by finding connections between the codes. After determining codes and patterns, it is necessary to display findings in an easily read and interpreted manner. The researcher used charts and tables to display codes and how codes were narrowed into themes.

Overview of the Study

The goal of this research study was to answer the research questions 1) What is the nature of a writing culture in a fifth-grade writing classroom? and 2) What are students' perceptions of writing in a fifth grade ELA classroom? This study was conducted at the modular campus for Southeast Elementary School during the 2017-2018 school year. The methodology for the proposed study was an intrinsic case study. Data was analyzed by breaking the data into themes. Data Sources are listed in Table 3.1.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study investigated the formation of a writing culture in a fifth grade English language arts classroom in the Southern United States. The research questions were: 1) What is the nature of a writing culture in a fifth-grade writing classroom? 2) What are students' perceptions of writing in a fifth grade ELA classroom?

Much research exists on teacher efficacy and its impacts on student literacy education. Additional studies have looked at student attitudes and perceptions and their impact on student confidence. Few studies have examined the ways teacher efficacy, student attitudes and perceptions, and writing curriculum combine to form a community of writers in an elementary classroom. This research study explored the impact of education power dynamics on student performance and on students' and teachers' attitudes toward education and discovered how power dynamics enacted in the curriculum impact students, writing curriculum, and culture. Researchers need to ask what impact these changes have on the students, the ways they write, and on their perceptions of their writing. This research study sought to discover what impact writing can have on empowering students.

In this chapter, I summarize the current body of literature relevant to this proposed study. In the first section, I discuss literacy instruction based on current and long-standing research studies. I also summarize the findings of what defines effective writing curriculum. Finally, I examine the research on students and teachers that determines writing efficacy.

Poststructuralism and Foucault

To understand the choice of poststructuralism as the lens for this research study, it is necessary to examine Foucauldian theory. Foucault (1995) questioned our society's structures and the underlying thoughts and conceptions in our society. While Foucault questioned the

power that governs the masses, he did not blame the masses. These concepts are important to the study because the study sought to understand how the power dynamics in the writing curriculum impacted students as the students did not create the power dynamics that govern them (Gutting, 2005; Hargis, 2001).

Foucault (1995) wrote on the impact of power on society. Some masses are demonized by society rather than being demons themselves. The 'mentally ill, criminals (of varying offenses), the homeless, Protestants, Catholics, and people of many other classifications have been marginalized throughout history. Since these individuals could also be categorized as masses, it is difficult to say Foucault demonized all masses of individuals. By definition, many of the participants in this proposed study were homeless; the flood displaced them, and many still lived in temporary housing at the time of the study. The students and their families were disempowered by a natural disaster. Foucault (1995) is a pinnacle in poststructuralism, in writing of the marginalized, those labeled by harmful discourses. This area of poststructuralism theory most resonates with those seeking to understand power relationships. This study sought to understand the power dynamics impacting students through a classroom writing culture. Poststructuralism and Foucauldian power dynamics were the lenses through which the researcher gained insight into the participants' perspectives (Foucault, 1995; Hargis, 2011)

Foucault (1995) traced the history and concept of punishment to the present day. In Foucauldian terms, the crime that was most threatening to the economic system, or the ruling system, was the crime that received the most punishment. Foucault (1995) discussed the school as an instrument of governmental and societal power. While teachers carry out the power dynamics, they are not the authors of this discourse. Through marginalization, teachers have become the executioners of this power relationship. Through the lens of poststructuralism, I

sought to understand the power dynamics functioning within a fifth-grade English language arts classroom. The students in this study were marginalized by low socioeconomic status, being displaced by a previous natural disaster, and some by race. In addition to these forms of disempowerment, these fifth-grade students had been subjected to an imposed writing structure that dominated much of the English language arts curriculum (Foucault, 1995).

Unlike structuralism, which focuses on the structure of language, poststructuralism focuses on power structures inherit in language and the unspoken. Discourse goes beyond language and is enmeshed in the way we perceive the world and our experiences. Foucault (1995) argued that meaning is constructed through discourses.

My lens was the constructionist theory of meaning and representation, which believes that actions and objects only take on meaning through our discourse. Foucault (1995) believed that all discourses are historicized and that our words and conceptions about a certain thing (i.e. mental illness) or groups of people, are inseparable from our historicized concepts. In education, the words "highly effective" are used frequently but the actual meaning of the term is different with every administrator who performs an observation. Poststructuralism seeks to illuminate that which is unspoken, marginalized, hidden from view, or judged using a power or valuative system (Gutting, 2005; Hall, 2001;), and asks us to question our most basic assumptions.

Foucault (1980) focused on the relationship between knowledge and power and on what he termed "apparatus", which allowed power to be instituted. Frequently, apparatus acts to disempower. This research study sought to understand the apparatus that was in place for the students in a fifth-grade English language arts classroom and how it impacted writing culture and student attitudes toward themselves as authors. This study also sought to understand how

students navigated through this space and how writing and student writers were influenced by the power dynamic in the classroom.

For Foucault (1980), knowledge was inextricably linked to power. To know implies a certain authority. Once something is known, it is accepted as truth, at least to the person professing the knowledge. Foucault (1980) thought that such claims used "knowledge" to gain power; he envisioned power as a 'net-like organization'. (p. 117) The student participants in this study were caught in a net of power. They were surrounded by the dynamics of the public-school system, governmental control of the school system, a thousand-year flood, displacement, homelessness, poverty, great personal loss, and minority status for some. This research examined how students navigated the power dynamics and the writing curriculum, and whether writing helped empower them.

Lagemann (2000) recounted the early tug of war involved in taking charge of education. Teachers have been marginalized in their own professions and given little efficacy. Through historical accounts and events, Lagemann (2000) emphasized that teachers were seldom considered in the professionalization of their own field; such a power relationship still exists in schools. Foucault (1995) discussed the school as an instrument of societal power. While teachers may carry out such power dynamics, they are not the authors of this discourse, a topic that deems consideration in studying the dynamics of the writing curriculum, written by a governmental agency, and its impact on student writing culture.

Writing and Literacy

While the definition of literacy has shifted, literacy has remained as one of the core goals of schooling. Street's (2003) definition of literacy was used for the study:

> What has come to be termed the "New Literacy Studies" (NLS) (GEE, 1991;

> Street, 1996) represents a new tradition considering the nature of literacy, Focusing not so much on acquisition of skills, as in dominant approaches, but rather on what it means to think of literacy as a social practice (Street, 1985). This entails recognition of multiple literacies, varying according to time and space, but also contested in relations of power. (p. 17)

Literacy maintains its basic definition but takes on a new role in the current arena of accountability and high states testing. Previously, writing was taught in later elementary, but is now considered foundational and is typically taught with the development of reading starting in kindergarten. Wagner, Venezsky, and Street (1999) wrote, "Writing is closely connected to, fosters or even enforces the development of logic, the distinction of myth from history, the elaboration of bureaucracy, the shift from little communities to complex cultures" (p. 35). They argued that literacy is social, not fixed. The technological world is proving this as a fact. Our definition must now include the navigation through the ever-growing world of information. With Vygotsky (1962), views on writing shifted to a socially-mediated, recursive process.

Vygotsky (1962) believed that writing should be taught by using experiences that students have shared, a view different from the scripted, highly analytical writing required as early as fourth grade. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) asserted that novice writers are knowledge tellers and expert writers are "knowledge transformers". Students must be instilled with confidence in their ability to think for themselves for this to happen. To truly become an expert writer in these terms, students must develop a confidence in their voices. Part of developing a writing culture involves students viewing themselves as writers. Other factors in student writing success is their confidence as readers and in basic literacy skills.

Young-Suk, Al Otaiba, Folsom, Greenwhich, and Puranin (2014) pointed to the relationship between reading and writing. These researchers examined the dimensionality of first grade writing and looked at the six traits of writing, syntactic, and productivity measures.

They found that reading ability impacts the quality and productivity of writing. Students' organization and content also correlated to their reading fluency. Students need to be exposed to rich and varied literature to enhance their written composition. More classroom time must be given for students to become fluent readers and writers instead of focusing on standards.

Routman (1996) used research to advocate for a more balanced approach to literacy. Her book addressed some of the political rhetoric that attacks education. Routman (1996) stated that we are over emphasizing "discrete" and "superficial skills" at the expense of "interpreting, evaluation, and analyzing." (p. 76) Hence, the latest wave of curricular reform has swept in. Common Core is a federally mandated program of curricular reform that restructured instruction in both English language arts and mathematics. The goal of Common Core is deeper learning and higher order thinking. It has been controversial in the news and among parents and teachers as students are expected to bridge these gaps without allowing them to master the necessary reading skills.

Using current and past research, Routman (1996) described the components of an effective literacy program; she reported that effective literacy program must include a strong literature base, a strong writing program, explicit skill base (like phonemic awareness), on-going diagnostics, and powerful intervention. Test scores in isolation provide little information on how a school is serving various populations or uncovering areas in which students struggle. Routman (1996) asserted that solid writing instruction must include sustained writing time, student-teacher conferences, and peer conferences. Students need opportunities to write daily, yet the constraints of the current curriculum require the mastery of so many standards that available instructional time is depleted.

Wood and Dickinson (2000) provided a guide for teaching middle grades literacy. They found that the teacher roles consistent with promoting literacy are being a reflective practitioner, being a collaborator, a monitor, and actively mentoring students. Numerous articles speak to the difficulties for teachers in meeting all of these roles and fulfilling 'rigorous' standards. Research also showed that schools need a school wide commitment to literacy and teachers need shared goals and definitions of what it is to be literate. Constant curricular shifts are an issue as schools and teachers struggle to come to a consensus and find planning time to form these goals. Recent educational budget cuts have begun providing a small amount of stability in curriculum but the state has lacked the budget for rampant educational reform.

Gambrell et al. (2000) found that motivation is key in all student success. Students who are motivated read more, and students with more reading experience have a better chance of overall reading success. To be motivated, students need to initiate and sustain goal directed action. For this to occur, a student must place value on the type of work they are doing in the classroom. Motivated students read more, have a better chance of success in the classroom, and pay better attention to their schoolwork. Students are motivated by choice and choice is an important component of student empowerment; for a strong student writing culture to develop students need to be motivated as writers. Gambrell et al. (2000) also asserted that in adolescence, students referencing themselves to their peers as collaboration becomes more important at this stage. Classrooms that help students develop intrinsic motivation allow students to seek answers to questions, communicate ideas, debate, and grow as listeners, writers, and learners. Reconciling this classroom approach to the high-pressure accountability measures is difficult; teachers may desire to motivate students but lack the freedom to incorporate these practices into their classrooms.

Blanch, Forsythe, Van Allen, & Roberts (2017) stated that “Teachers are prone to assign writing rather than teach it…yet today’s students need modeling and guided practice if they are to grow as writers” (p. 49). Their research in fifth grade classrooms showed that students had knowledge of the writing process but did not know how to use it effectively. The researchers pointed to the writing process as a gateway to lead students to authentic writing. Liner and Butler’s (2000) research on writer’s workshops confirmed them as a method to help students take responsibility for their own reading and writing.

Liner and Butler (2000) emphasized the importance of student choice in literacy. The authors urged the use of writing workshops and emphasized student choice, ample writing time, and student responsibility. Wood and Nichols’ (2000) research with struggling readers in the middle grades revealed that daily writing is instrumental in helping at risk students. Wood and Nichols (2000) found, "There is a reciprocal relationship between reading and writing" (p. 244). They emphasized daily time to practice these skills and that students also need the opportunities to participate in authentic writing.

Grainger, Goouch, and Lambrith’s (2005) research with the two year *We're Writers* research project was to examine teacher and student perceptions of writing. The researchers used questionnaires, surveys, writing samples, teacher commentary, and the implementation of writing workshop. They documented, "The best writing is vigorous, committed, honest, and interesting. We have not included the qualities in our statements of attainment because they cannot be mapped into levels" (p. 11). Standardized testing and accountability change the way teachers teach writing; some practices teach students to advocate a standardized form of writing. Grainger et al. (2005) emphasized viewing literature as a social practice with a focus on empowering students. Additionally, they asserted, "There is not formula for helping students

develop a voice in writing" (p. 12). The authors encouraged increasing children's knowledge of language and collaboration. Again, we see a definition of writing that mentions making connections and meaning. Grainger et al. (2005) asserted that writing should be self-directed and encourage agency. For this to happen, emotional engagement with writing topic is needed, as emotional engagement requires students to be invested in their topic.

Ottier and Mahony (2018) researched the efficacy of performance feedback for student writers. The researchers found that performance feedback did not have a strong correlation with student success. They did find, however, that student task effort impacted their perceptions of their writing. They defined self-efficacy as "a students' confidence in their ability to perform a specific skill or task" (p. 412) and found a correlation between student task effort and self-efficacy. Their research showed that student task effort was more important than mastery experiences or feedback to student perceptions of writing. This supports the importance of student motivation and ownership in determining their success as writers and their confidence in their ability as writers.

Writing Curricula

Pressely, Mohan, Fingeret, Reffitt, and Raphael-Bogaert (2007) found that an effective English language arts classroom looks different from an average or ineffective classroom. The researchers found that effective literacy teachers employed up to fifty motivating practices a day. Classrooms overflowed with writing materials, books, and other tools for literacy and instruction. Pressely et al. (2007) found that effective literacy teachers had a thorough understanding of what students had learned the previous year. The researchers also found that effective writing instruction required time for students to practice, feedback, multiple drafts, and teacher modeling. Pressely et al. (2007) reported that an effective English language arts

classroom has trained teachers, uses the plan, drafts, revises models, gives many times for students to practice, demands that students improve, utilizes writing across the curriculum, involves teacher instruction and a sense of enthusiasm for writing.

Ciullo and Mason's (2017) research on middle grade students with learning disabilities found that students needed to learn self-regulation in writing. Self-regulation was defined as the ability to think critically about and take ownership of their own writing. Ciullo and Mason's (2107) research found that this was essential for students to write across multiple genres. The researchers emphasized the importance of using evidence-based writing instruction and the writing process to help students develop this ability.

Writing is multifaceted. Good writing curriculum must contain many components including sustained writing time, student-teacher conferences to discuss writing, peer conferences among students, student choice, time for students to write daily, and writing workshops. For students to become successful writers, the school should have a school-wide vision and commitment to literacy. To develop the intrinsic motivation to write, students must view writing as a creative process, view literacy as a social practice, have self-directed working time, be given student choice, be given some control, and have open-ended assignments. Writing should be viewed as a reflective and recursive process. The teachers' role in writing instruction varies based on the part of the process in which the students are engaged and the maturity students possess as writers. Teachers should be reflective practitioners, collaborators with students, collaborators with coworkers, active mentors, and teachers should engage in writing (Gambrell, Dromsky, & Mazzoni, 2000; Grainger, Goouch, & Lambrith, 2005; Liner & Butler, 2000; Routman, 1996; Wood & Dickinson, 2000; Wood & Nichols, 2000).

Writing Efficacy

Much of writing research centers on teacher factors and student factors that determine efficacy of writing instruction. Teacher factors include teacher's perception about writing, teacher's perceptions of themselves as writers, and teacher training (Bifu-Ambe, 2013; Frawley, 2014; Graham, 2012; Icy, 2013; Irwin & Knodle, 2008; McCarthey, 2014). Student factors include student literacy, student reading level, students' opportunities to write at home and school, and student attitude towards writing, etc. (Brown, Morrell, & Rowlands, 2011; Burke, 2014; Hamilton, 2011; Kent, Wanzek, Petscher, Otaiba, Kim, 2014; VanHartingsveld, 2013). Teachers training, positive attitudes toward writing, and positive attitudes towards themselves as writers positively impact student writing. For students, their reading level, literate environments, increased time for writing, and a positive attitude toward writing also positively impact student writing. All of these elements factor into student writing success. The preceding studies dealt with students around the globe and addressed issues of teacher training, focused on interviewing teachers, or focused on students in a summer writing program; attention was not on the teacher navigating a constantly shifting curriculum. Students in many studies are in classes universally considered basic writing curriculum (creative writing, the editing process) only a few years ago. This researcher hoped to gain an in depth look at these new spaces within curriculum and how they interact and influence the development of a student writing culture.

To foster a sense of efficacy, Grainger et al. (2005) encouraged choice and open-ended writing opportunities. They urged that control needs to be passed to the learners, and they stated that curriculum is not responding to diversity among students. Teaching voice involves the oral culture of the classroom, the teacher's knowledge of subject, and awareness of the need for creativity. Grainger et al. (2005) urged conversation and communication among students.

Working with teachers in the *We're Writers* Project, one teacher stated, "The children in my classroom were writing for me and the curriculum and not for themselves" (p. 67). For students to write for themselves, writing must be meaningful. In a standardized testing environment, it is difficult to provide students time to write for themselves and for their choices.

Eren (2009) examined teacher efficacy among students training to be teachers and student teachers, and discussed the link between student motivation and behavior. There has been extensive research in the area of teacher efficacy relative to student achievement (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Eren, 2009; Frawley, 2014; Graham, 2012; Icy, 2013; Irwin & Knodle, 2008; McCArthey, 2014) but Eren (2009) looked specifically at preservice teachers and how their beliefs impacted their efficacy. He found that preservice teachers with constructivist conceptions had a goal-oriented approach, high efficacy beliefs, and low traditional conceptions. Eren (2009) found the student teachers have more traditional conceptions than teachers in the earlier portion of their degree program. It is probable that this shift continues as these preservice teachers enter their own classrooms. While there is research about the positive impact of self-efficacy, more needs to be learned about the impact of shifting curriculum on teacher self-efficacy.

Rietdijk, Van Weijen, Bergh, and Jannsen (2018) researched the relationships between classroom practice, time, and teacher beliefs impacted student instruction. The researchers studied the approaches of communicative writing, process writing, and writing strategy instruction. They found that there was a relationship between classroom writing practice, learning time, and a teacher's beliefs about writing. Classroom writing time and time to participate in all of the stages of the writing process were found to be important factors in student's motivation to write. The researchers also found that communicative feedback and

teacher training enhanced both teacher and student efficacy. Teacher efficacy and beliefs are important components in student writing success.

McCarthey, Woodard, and Kang (2013) examined the relationship between teacher beliefs about writing and their instruction. They found dissonances in what the 20 teachers they interviewed and observed teachers espoused as their beliefs on writing and their instructional practices. The authors cited the complexities of writing and the increasing stringency of curriculum reform as possible reasons for this dissonance. They wrote, "In this era of standardization teachers are often required to implement scripted literacy curricula, which leaves little room for individualizing instruction" (p. 65).

Through survey research, Corkett, Hatt, and Benevides (2011) examined the relationship and intersection between teacher efficacy, student efficacy, and student ability in writing. Corkett et al. (2011) cited a gap in the research in the overlap of these areas. They found that a teacher's belief in student efficacy correlated positively with actual student abilities. Lack of student efficacy in reading and/or writing correlated with lack of fluency in writing, however, the teacher's perception of the student did not correlate with student efficacy. The researchers cited the need for more research to understand all of these dynamics.

Bright (2016) performed a case study in several middle grade classrooms and observed the way teachers and students talked about writing and how writing instruction was delivered. Bright (2016) stated that the generally accepted method of teaching writing is prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. The generally accepted purposes for school writing included transactional writing (inform/persuade), expressive writing (relate to personal experience), and poetic writing (create an imaginative form). Bright (2016) found that students did not always perceive the same values and traits of writing that the teacher wished to

communicate. Students, however, did learn many of the traits their teachers communicated in terms of what made a good writer.

Writing as Empowerment

Writing is multifaceted. Many elements go into a successful writing curriculum. Additional factors determine the efficacy of teachers' attempts to teach writing and students' ultimate success. There is also the element of student empowerment as writing is an opportunity to promote democracy and empowerment.

According to Letizia (2016), self-authorship requires making decisions and trusting your internal voice. Students must be allowed to create new ideas and to 'own' their work. When all assignments are dictated to students with little choice, students have little chance to develop these abilities. The National Writing Project (2016) desired, "a future where every person is an accomplished writer, engaged learner, and active participant in an interconnected world" (p. 220). This vision extends beyond the scope of a nine-month curriculum. Letizia (2016) wrote of the need for students to go through the stages of developing a socialized mind, the evaluation stage, and the ownership-creation phase or self-authorship. For a student to attain self-ownership, he or she must be allowed to pass through the evaluative or decision-making process. Student empowerment, therefore, must walk through the stages of helping students to find their voices.

Kissell and Miller (2015) urged the use of writer's workshop to empower students and teachers. Writer's workshop involves mini lessons, conferences, and a chance for students to share their work. The authors emphasize the importance of student writing choice and opportunities. Students are also permitted to confer with other students about writing. In Kissell and Miller's (2015) study, the students wrote books, the teacher fought for her vision with her

administrators, and the choice of topic gave room for students to write on topics that are typically hushed in schools. Student choice became an important aspect of democracy for both the teacher and the students. Writing in this situation served as more than an assignment.

Lensmire (2016) voiced the need for student choice in writing. He asserted that sometimes writer's workshop and critical pedagogy ignore the censoring power of a teacher's voice. While both writer's workshop and pedagogy emphasize student voice, there are many ways voice can be intentionally silenced. The teacher must be conscious of her own role in the power dynamic of the classroom. Editing out the meanings students make of texts can serve as a silencing critique. The students in Lensmire's study who were particularly vulnerable were students unpopular with their classmates. Lensmire (2016) warned, "Encouragement is sometimes not far from coercion in the classroom, given unequal power relations among teachers and students" (p. 5). He tells us to never forget that the voice is located firmly in the social context of the classroom. Lensmire encouraged paying attention to classroom communities and supporting them.

Garlid (2014) researched motivation in reluctant male fifth grade students; he worked with both males and females, but his research was focused on male writers. The researcher found that during his writing instruction boys used avoidance behaviors such as using the restroom, sharpening pencils, talking, daydreaming, doodling, and even faking illness. When Garlid (2014) administered a student writing survey, it was his fifth-grade males who scored the lowest. He indicated, "The pressures on students and teachers to meet deadlines, reach achievement goals, and address standards encouraged more compliance than creativity" (p. 48).

Garlid's (2014) used *After School Matters Research Fellowship* to fund an after school writing program to target intervention. During the after-school program, students were able to

choose their writing topic, receive feedback, and share their work. Garlid found that the students began to have a different perception of writing. Some students whose parents forced them into the program initially wanted to sign up for the next session. Garlid's success with these reluctant writers placed the power back in the hands of these students.

Pierce (1997) performed her research with reluctant writers in a fourth and fifth grade urban elementary school. Her data consisted of standardized test scores, parent surveys, writing samples, and teacher observations. Pierce (1997) implemented cooperative writing as a targeted intervention during which students created writing portfolios and conferencing with teachers and peers. Pierce (1997) found that factors impacting writing included spelling and handwriting problems, poor mechanical skills, lack of motivation, previous writing failure, and fear of exposing feelings to their peers. Cooperative writing opportunities increased student motivation and confidence in the writing process.

Curriculum Mandates

In *Implementing the Common Core State Standards: The Role of the Elementary School Leader,* we see a document that is full of value laden terminology, and we see teachers and educational leaders being pushed toward Common Core implementation as the cure all. Funded by Metlife, this document offers some evidence as to why teachers may espouse different beliefs about teaching than they express in their teaching. Teachers must adapt to whatever the new buzz words in education appear, and the current research does not seem to question the impact of this pressure on a teacher's use of curriculum. The impact on students remains a question.

Various factors must be in place for writing instruction to be effective as there are many features to an effective writing program that impact student success in the curriculum. While

empowering students goes beyond this, the students in this study faced the additional struggle of being displaced by the impact of a natural disaster, an additional challenge this researcher faced.

While some traditional guidelines of what writing consists of have remained constant, recent education shifts have created dynamic changes in the type of writing expected from students. From a teacher perspective, there has been a lag in the training into help teachers and students cope with these changes. Hall, Hutchinson, and White (2016) surveyed and interviewed teachers about their perceptions of Common Core and found that teacher perceptions varied from supportive to skeptical. One teacher stated, "The Common Core State Standards in writing are an upper middle-class pipe dream about education. It is not relevant to many of my students, and they will never need it again" (p. 88). Research suggested that teachers' classroom actions and interactions with students were influenced by their personal theories and beliefs about teaching and learning. New teacher theories and beliefs are introduced during professional development workshops, observation of peer teaching models, and personal teaching experiences. Hall et al. (2016) reported that if teachers do not believe in a program or standard, they are not likely to implement it effectively.

This study examined the power dynamics of how students develop a writing culture. The students in the fifth grade English language arts class participated in normal curriculum activities. I used both an emic and etic perspective to gain an understanding of the factors that influenced writing curriculum and culture.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

The methodology for this research study was instrumental case study. Stake (1995) explained instrumental case study as, "For instrumental case study, the issue is dominant. We start and end with issues dominant" (p. 16).

Creswell (2014) stated that qualitative study works best when dealing with a natural setting. The student and teacher participants in this case study were in a classroom setting, a natural setting for school-aged children. Creswell (2014) also emphasized the importance of the researcher as a key instrument since "Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants. They may use protocol, but the researchers are the ones who actually gather the information" (p. 185). My role as a teacher in the classroom made researcher participation a certainty.

Another aspect of qualitative research is using multiple forms of data. The forms of data analyzed in this study were from student, teacher, and curriculum sources. Creswell (2014) referred to using inductive and deductive data analysis to work back and forth through the data to build themes. Coding data was the primary means of data analysis for this study (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995).

Creswell (2014) detailed participant meanings, emergent design, reflexivity, and holistic account. One of the key components of the research involved participants making meaning. I did not know what patterns would emerge from the experiences of the participants, thus the design of this study was by nature emergent. Reflexivity also was a vital part of this research study. As the researcher and also the classroom teacher, I reflected not only on my personal background and conceptions, but also on my teacher practice and its vulnerabilities and failings.

This study was a holistic view of the daily events that shape student writing perceptions and the culture of the classroom (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).

Creswell (2013) informed us, "Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system...over time through detailed, in-depth data collection" (p. 182). In this research study, the classroom was viewed holistically as a single case. Classrooms have often been referred to as their own entity and certainly each classroom has its own rules, procedures, dynamics, and its own personality. The teacher is part of establishing the microcosm that is the classroom.

This instrumental case study was guided by two research questions: (1) What is the nature of a writing culture in a fifth-grade writing classroom? and (2) What are student perceptions of writing in a fifth-grade writing classroom? My case study consisted of a subset of my English language arts class, all participants of which were given pseudonyms. This study allowed me, as a researcher, to gain an in-depth understanding of a developing culture and student perceptions of writing.

Context of the Study

The elementary school was in Lancaster County in rural southeastern Louisiana. During the 2017-2018 school year, the school was located in a wooded area near many growing subdivisions. Teachers at Southeast Elementary were informed that it could be another year before FEMA determined what to do with their former campus. The county instructed teachers to be prepared to stay in their temporary classrooms for up to five years.

The School

The original campus for Southeast Elementary was located mid-city and was surrounded by small businesses and neighborhoods. During "The Great Flood" of 2016, a storm system

dropped 21 inches of rain on parts of the Southeastern United States in less than 24 hours. This event is now termed a “thousand-year flood”, meaning that yearly there is only a 0.1% chance of a flood of this magnitude occurring. Lancaster County sustained the most damage when 85% percent of the homes in the county were flooded by rainwater, river water, or backwater. Southeast Elementary School received over seven feet of water and nearly every classroom resource, computer, and personal item was lost.

Twenty-five percent of the schools in Lancaster County flooded. Of those schools, five received severe damage; Southeast Elementary School received the most damage. The county faced the unprecedented challenge of relocating the students and teachers during the 2016-2017 school year. Southeast's current, large, modular campus was one of the solutions and is located at the back of Justice Place Elementary Campus.

Southeast Elementary was considered a Title I school based on the number of students on free or reduced lunch. Seventy-five percent of Southeast's students tested proficient in English language arts, which placed it above the state average but below the average of the general population. At this writing, Southeast's school letter grade was a high C on a state scale of A-F, and was earned on the basis of scores on the state standardized tests.

The Classroom

My fifth-grade classroom was the site for this research. Located in a tan modular building on the back of campus, the classroom was decorated in the school’s red, white, and dark blue colors, and had a nautical theme. There was a large whiteboard, a teacher computer and projector on a rolling cart, and flexible seating. In the back of the room, there was a standing station. Other stations included a seated station with yoga stools around a coffee table, a yoga ball with legs at desk, backless stools, a classic desk station, a table with seats, and balance disks

with lap desks. The fifth-grade classes shared a class set of laptops, which allowed students to have the computers during a portion of each day. A large classroom library overflowed three bookshelves of donated.

The Teacher-Researcher

I was both the researcher and teacher for the study. During my thirteen years of teaching I have taught second, third, fourth, and fifth grades although most of my experience has been in fifth grade. I have taught in a self-contained setting, with a partner teacher, and with two partner teachers. Most of my experience is in English language arts, but I have also taught mathematics, social studies, science, and art.

In this research study, I faced the challenge of being both an insider and an outsider. It is a challenge for a teacher to separate herself from the classroom when she has determined the classroom rules, procedures, décor, atmosphere, and assignments. While curriculum is usually outside of the teacher's realm of control, the implementation of curriculum is open to individual interpretation to some extent. At the same time, the teacher is an outsider in terms of status as a student. The teacher cannot control classroom location, number of students, socioeconomic status of the students, administrative policy, and other factors that impact students and their school success. Students may act differently in the presence of an authority figure, such as a teacher, whose presence impacts the classroom environment and student behavior.

The English language arts curriculum has experienced many changes. Increased instructional time is required to help students prepare for standardized tests. Five years ago the change in the way writing is tested impacted my classroom instruction. Though the state assessment changed from Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers

(PARCC) to Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP 360) in 2017, the period of this study, the writing requirements and rubric remained the same for both assessments.

I do not suggest that I looked at this research topic with fresh eyes. As an educator for 12 years before the study was conducted, my years of classroom experience shaped my perceptions of schooling in general and of schooling in my district. I perceived what types of instruction impacted my students and why types of instruction failed. I also had my beliefs about how writing should be viewed and taught.

Philosophically, I believe that writing is an iterative, recursive, creative process. Ideally, writing should encourage a culture of creativity and empowerment in the classroom. Instructionally, I have questioned the impact of the testing writing requirements due to standardized testing on my classroom instruction and how students perceive writing.

As a teacher and researcher, my personal background also impacts the lens through which I view my students and my classroom. I am a white woman in her mid-thirties, a Christian, a divorcee, a mother of two sons, and a teacher with years of experience. I attended school K to 12 in Lancaster County schools, thus I grew up in and still live in the community where I teach. My sons attend the school where I teach. I have life-long perceptions of what schooling was like for me and of what the experience of growing up in Dunmore was like. I attended a small, rural elementary school in the county that would have been considered a Title I (high poverty) school had such a distinction existed at that time. My entire teaching career has been spent it Title I schools.

According to Stake (1995), a case researcher's roles include: researcher as teacher, as advocate, as evaluator, as biographer, as participant observer, as interviewer, as counselor, and as interpreter. I experienced each of these roles as the researcher for this study. As a teacher-

researcher, my role was highly participatory in the study of the culture of my English language arts classroom.

Stake (1995) wrote, "The intention of research is to inform, to sophisticate, to assist the increase of competence and maturity, to socialize, and to liberate. These are also the responsibilities of the teacher" (p. 92). I adopted both an emic and etic perspective (Pike, 1967) in the classroom. An emic perspective is an insider role in the classroom. In my emic perspective, I was part of the classroom environment and culture and an everyday participant. Like all classroom teachers, my personal beliefs about teaching, writing, and education were transmitted to my students. Some of these beliefs and decisions such as choice of reading material and writing prompt options were transmitted purposefully while other beliefs were unconsciously transmitted.

An etic perspective is an outsider perspective. By nature, all teachers are insiders, but they are outsiders in terms of student tasks and culture. I adopted the etic role of researcher when conducting this study.

As the classroom teacher, my role was one of participant observer. My role as a teacher was a consistent, daily aspect of the research study. This role allowed me to have a daily view of the classroom dynamics. I planned the lessons, structured the seating, and set the routines and procedures. As a researcher it was impossible to completely separate myself from this universe of my creation. Multiple data collection sources, triangulation of data, and interrater reliability allowed me to participate but not to dominate.

Participants

The Students

The student participants in the study attended Southeast Elementary, a Title I elementary school. To be considered Title I, forty percent or more of the student body must meet the federal income requirements for free or reduced lunch. Before the flood, enrollment was 541 students but Southeast lost one hundred and fifty students after the flood. Approximately eighty percent of students were on free or reduced lunch prior to the flood. For the 2017-2018 school year, the federal government granted Lancaster County free breakfast and lunch for all students.

At the time of the study the school demographic were 50 % Hispanic, 32% Caucasian, 15% African American, and 2% Asian. Most of the Hispanic students at the school were English as a Second Language (ESL). The students who returned to their neighborhoods are bussed several additional miles to Southeast's new, temporary building.

The student participants were part of the 24 students in my homeroom class. While I taught science to the entire fifth grade of 70 students, I only taught English language arts to my homeroom. Of those students, twelve were pulled for a portion of the English language arts block into the special education room. Of the remaining 12 students in my room during the entire English language arts time, six were included in the study.

Johnson and Christensen (2014) described a critical case as "cases that can be used to make a previously justified point particularly well or are known to be particularly important" (p. 270). I used critical case sampling to select the six students to study. Despite being fluent readers, all of these students varied in their writing ability. Additionally, their writing ability did not correlate with their ability. Their writing differences helped me to understand their perceptions of and their attitudes toward writing. I chose two striving writers (Dee and

Leonard), two average writers (Baylor and Justin), and two above average writers (Grace and Julie) as participants. Their classification as a striving, average, or above average writer was determined by their performance on their writing prompts submitted in the first few weeks of class.

Striving Students

Dee.

Dee was a ten-year-old female who she struggled as a writer and scored C's and D's on her writing. Dee had never repeated a grade. While she worked very hard in class, the gradebook showed that she made a combination of A's, B's, and C's in other subjects. Dee was well liked by her classmates but was sensitive and sometimes struggled in her relationships with a few of the female students in her homeroom. My anecdotal notes documented that occasionally she cried over interactions with her classmates, but she typically managed to address issues with the other students without adult intervention.

Dee's parents were divorced, and she reported the relationship between them was combative at times. One day, a teacher informed me that Dee was in the office crying, and she would not say what it was about. While sensitive, Dee was not a dramatic student, and she tried to hide her emotions when she was upset. I found her in the principal's office where the bus driver had taken her from the bus. She confided in me that her parents had argued over her telling her mother something fun she did while at her father's house, and Dee was afraid they would go back to court. I explained to her that this was not her fault and it was unlikely her parents would return to court over an argument. When she calmed down, Dee's resiliency kicked in and she functioned the rest of the day as herself.

Dee was athletic and a member of the school track team. At recess I noticed that Dee could usually outrun most of the boys in our homeroom. Dee scored a 450 on her STAR test; STAR is an acronym for Standardized Testing for the Assessment of Reading. Scores range on a scale from 200 to 1600. For fifth grade, the benchmark score at the beginning of the year is 500, which put Dee slightly below average.

As a writer, Dee struggled with confidence. She asked many questions, stayed during PE classes to write, and frequently claimed, "I can't do it" during writing instruction. Despite her efforts, her narrative prompts show that she struggled with story structure. I classified Dee as a struggling writer because of her scores and the amount of editing and guidance she needed throughout the writing process.

Leonard.

Leonard was an eleven-year-old male whom I learned from parent/teacher conference day was an only child. He had many friends and was chosen for group work and activities first by his classmates. Anecdotal notes showed that he was funny, witty, and temperamental and sought a large amount of attention both from his teachers and his peers. Typically, Leonard sought and was able to acquire positive attention but he sometimes struggled with peer relations. My anecdotal notes documented that frequently a teacher had to mediate between Leonard and another student. He seemed to struggle with navigating classroom conflict.

Leonard was in the Honors Club, which required all A's and B's for admission. While he was capable of making straight A's according to STAR testing and his previous year's test scores, he occasionally slacked off on seat work and favored social interaction with his peers. His writing samples showed that he struggled as a writer, scoring C's and D's on his

assignments. His English language arts grade remained an A or B due to grades in reading comprehension and spelling.

While Leonard scored 650 on the STAR reading tests, he struggled to find motivation as a writer. On writing assignments, Leonard frequently requested length requirements and produced the bare minimum. Though capable, the work he submitted in writing class categorized him as a striving writer.

Proficient Student

***Baylor*.**

Baylor was an eleven-year-old male whose identical twin brother Colby was in another fifth-grade homeroom. Anecdotal notes recorded that the two had an extremely close relationship with little conflict between them. Baylor and his brother also maintained friendships independent of one another. Baylor's younger half-sister was in the second grade and he talked about her frequently in class.

According to our parent teacher conference in October, Baylor's parents were divorced but had a civil relationship. Baylor's father was former military and had a history of mental health issues. For about five years, his father was mostly absent from his life. At the end of the fourth-grade school year, Baylor's father returned to the area and sought partial custody. His mother and stepfather primarily raised the children.

I class one day, Baylor openly expressed to his classmates, and "You've never heard yelling until you hear my dad yell." He explained that his father had Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). One of the girls responded that Baylor's dad could benefit from a therapy dog, to which Baylor responded, "Why would he need to do that when he has me and Colby to yell at?" Despite these stressors, Baylor was a happy, well-adjusted, well-liked student. He

frequently made jokes in class causing laughter and responses from his classmates. Baylor always had friends to sit with and with whom to pair for group discussions.

Baylor was an A/B honor roll student. Anecdotal notes provided many examples where he could have been classified as a class clown, however, Baylor seemed to understand the invisible lines drawn by teachers and classmates. He kept himself verbally in check without reprimands or reminders from the staff.

Baylor scored a 700 on the STAR and fluency testing. As a writer, he was average, scoring B's and C's on his assignments. He expressed confidence in himself as a writer but struggled with story structure. Baylor preferred to write comics or about scientific topics.

Justin.

Justin was a ten-year-old male student whose test scores indicated he was intelligent, but he was disorganized and forgetful. He lost every paper and assignment given to him at least once. It was not uncommon for his possessions and work to be found at random classroom stations several times a week. While he required repeated reminders during every instructional period and for assignments, his warm disposition and his smile that lit up the room made it impossible for his classmates or me to become angry with him. He also was able to work in a group with almost any student in the classroom.

Justin scored a 750 on the STAR test. Student writing samples showed that Justin was unmotivated and reluctant to write about topics given in class, however, he was an effective writer when a topic suited him. Justin could write multiple pages in a sitting when he was allowed student choice. He was an average writer scoring B's and C's on writing assignments and thus classified as an average writer because of his grades.

Above Average Students

Julie.

Julie was an eleven-year-old female. Anecdotal notes showed that Julie was well liked by the boys in class, and frequently had males visiting her desk during independent work time. While Julie was a close friend with several of the female students in the class, these relationships were strained as the year progressed.

Julie was an honor roll student who scored all A's and B's. Although very social, she completed most classroom assignments on time. Julie's writing was excellent based on the state testing rubric in comparison with her peers. She had a thorough grasp of flow, grammar, and organization. Ironically, interviews and journals showed that she lacked confidence in her ability as a writer and was self-critical.

Grace.

Grace, a ten-year-old female, was the only straight A student in the homeroom and was voted "Student of the Year". She was a competitive cheerleader and a hard worker. Anecdotal notes show that while she sometimes stressed over lengthy assignments, she maintained an overall sunny disposition. Well-liked by both the boys and girls in her class, Grace was frequently asked to pair up or join groups. During flexible seating, she rotated her time among different sets of friends.

Grace was a high reader with a STAR reading score of 850 according to STAR and fluency testing. She was a highly proficient writer, scoring all A's on writing assignments. While her grammar, organization, and voice were above average, writing was not an activity of choice for Grace. She complained about the length of writing required in class assignments, about having to write on assigned passages, and about her hand hurting.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study took place during the 2017-2018 from August to February. Table 3.1 shows that types of data collected.

Table 3.1 Data Types

Data Type	Number of Pages
Student Artifacts	
Student Writing	103 pages
Student Journals	60 pages
Student Interviews	22 pages
Student Questionnaires	15 pages
Teacher Documents	
Anecdotal Notes	29 pages
Teacher Lesson Plans	120 pages
Intervention Plans	120 pages
Reflective Journal	20 pages
Curriculum Documents	
Grant Memos	6 pages
Faculty Meeting Memos	51 pages
Testing Memos and Documents	28 pages
Planning notes	51 pages
Meeting Notes	18 pages

Curriculum documents and meeting agendas related to writing were collected by the teacher throughout the semester. The teacher anecdotal notes and journal were completed at least once a week. Students wrote in their journals biweekly and completed writing assignments as part of their regular English language arts instruction. All students completed questionnaires and writing assignments as part of their regular English language arts instruction. Study students additionally participated in interviews during regular school hours. Students could participate in or decline being interviewed. Interviews were recorded and transcribed to Word documents.

Student Writing, Journals, and Writing Assignments

As part of the standard English language arts instruction, students participated in and completed writing tasks. During the first week of school, I had the students write me a letter addressing the questions: How do you feel about school? What is your favorite subject? What is your least favorite subject? How do you feel about reading/writing? What is something important that you think I should know about you?

All students kept writing portfolios throughout the semester, completed at least five full-length writing tasks with a variety of purposes, and completed writing samples during the normal English language arts period. Students who received modifications, such as extended time, as determined by their Individualized Education Plans (IEP's) received additional writing time throughout the school day.

Students wrote in their journals at least one day a week journals on a variety of topics as part of their standard English language arts instruction. During the semester of study, they completed journals topics from August to December for a total of twelve entries. Journal topics varied; sometimes, the students chose their own topic and other topics were teacher-assigned or related to students' reflections on their writing. Students completed questionnaires at the

beginning of the semester in August 2017. Questions included in the questionnaire are detailed in Appendix H.

Interviews & Transcriptions

During the interview process, I conducted face-to-face, semi-structured interviews to garner answers to both research questions. Interviews were conducted during school hours. Some interviews were done as a focus group during ELA time in the format of a class meeting. Individual student interviews took place during the students' physical education time period.

Students were interviewed in August 2017 and at the end of the study in February 2018. Questions asked in the student interviews included: How do you feel about writing? Do you write at home during your free time? What do you like to write about? If you don't like writing, what might change your mind? How do you feel about yourself as a writer? Student interview questions are found in Appendix A.

Interviews were audio recorded. I listened to the interview audio from initial interviews in August and then transcribed them. I included punctuation and pauses in my transcriptions.

Teacher Reflective Journals and Anecdotal Notes

Teacher anecdotal notes were part of the normal classroom management and procedure and varied in forms and purposes. Student journals and writing assignments contained teacher notes of encouragement and coaching to help students hone their writing skills. Documentation was kept from any parent-teacher conferences held at school or by phone. Student writing conferences were held as needed throughout the writing process and notes were taken in a teacher notebook during writing conferences. Teacher anecdotal notes on intervention lesson plans were kept during computer lab instruction.

I kept a reflective journal throughout the 2017-2018 school year. My journal topics varied and were based on day-to-day classroom occurrences. I also recorded student writing progress, hindrances, and other pertinent classroom and school incidents in my journal during the study.

Curriculum and Classroom Artifacts

In the course of daily instruction, I encountered and created many curricula-based documents. These documents determined what type of instruction students received and on what their lessons focused. Curriculum documents included Common Core English language arts unit plans, teacher lesson plans, teacher written tests, and assessments, Common Core based assessments, and required unit tests.

Verifications and Validity

Creswell (2014) wrote, “Inquirers explicitly identify reflexively their biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status that shape their interpretations formed during the study" (p. 187). In this study, where the roles of the researcher were intricately entwined with the roles of an educator, it was important to ensure the validity of data analysis methods. To ensure ethical considerations were met, an application was submitted to the Institutional Review Board. The application consisted of a description of the study, the participants, and sample interview and questionnaire questions. Students, administrators, and parents received and signed informed consent and assent forms. The student participants engaged in activities that were part of a standard English language arts curriculum. Participation was voluntary and did not impact student grades. Precautions (pseudonyms for school, county, and participants) were taken to protect the anonymity of the participants. Data was stored in a locked filing cabinet.

To ensure validity in this study, I triangulated data. Multiple data sources were employed and are listed in Table 3.1. To allow readers of the study to grasp the importance of the setting, I used thick description in discussing classroom incidents, observations, interviews, and data. I sought to give readers a photographic image of the classroom and the participants in the study.

As the teacher and the researcher were one and the same, I used interrater reliability to ensure validity. After interviews, observations, and the questionnaires were conducted and reviewed, I selected a colleague, based at my school and who had fifteen years of teaching experience, and provided her with the transcription and notes, student questionnaires, final student interviews, and student writing samples. I asked her to code the data for student attitudes and perceptions of writing. For her first coding of the data, she read through the student questionnaires, interviews, and writing samples and made anecdotal notes. Her coding showed: negative student attitudes toward writing, student avoiding writing, minimalistic writing, mixed opinions on writing, student request for choice, student desire to write about other topics, student resistance to test preparatory prompts. During the first cycle coding, her codes were a 70% match for mine. I asked her to reread the data and focus on student perceptions, attitudes, and student voice or lack of student voice. Her coding remained consistent. She added students use limited language in writing, writing bare minimum on required topics, and students voicing dislike for writing curriculum. For the second cycle, our coding matched 94% of the time.

I described myself, my background, my socioeconomic status, teaching experience, and other factors that might shade or impact my analysis of the case. I was honest about any preconceived expectations that I held before and throughout the study. I disclosed all negative or discrepant information that ran contrary to the themes emerging from the study (Creswell, 2014).

Through multiple checks of validity and reliability, I have ensured the case study is represented in an ethical and unbiased way.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2013) wrote, "The processes of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process. They are interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project" (p. 182). The two questions to be addressed during data collection were (1) what is the nature of writing in a fifth grade English language arts classroom? and (2) What are student perceptions of writing in a fifth grade English language arts classroom? To answer question one, I analyzed curriculum documents, faculty meeting documents, student and teacher reflection journals, teacher anecdotal notes, intervention lab plans, and student writing samples. To answer question two, students participated in questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. I also collected student reflection journals, teacher reflection journals, student writing samples evaluated for evidence of voice, and curriculum and classroom artifacts.

For this research study, I conducted and audio recorded initial interviews in August. I listened to the interviews after recording and then I transcribed interviews into word documents. I used punctuation and noted pauses. I took some memos during interviews. While I had prepared questions, I also asked questions based on the participants' responses. I collected other documents such as teacher notes, handouts, student writing samples, and curricular materials that had teacher anecdotal notes as a natural part of the planning and instructional process. Huberman and Miles (1994) emphasized the importance of writing marginal notes, drafting summaries of field notes, and noting relationships among categories. I adhered to this process as much as possible during the collection of data to ensure that impressions gathered while in the field were not lost.

From August through February, I collected all student writing and journals and read journals weekly. I read writing assignments and helped students edit their rough drafts. Some editing occurred in the classroom instructional time while other editing was done during computer lab small group time. I assessed final drafts using the state writing rubric found in Appendix C. Completion of the entire writing process typically took two weeks.

Teacher lesson plans and intervention plans were completed weekly. Teacher anecdotal notes on intervention plans were written weekly. Curriculum documents were collected throughout the data collection period.

I sorted the meeting notes and handouts into categories and pulled out all handouts and memorandums that did not apply to writing curriculum. After winnowing the data, I assigned codes and in vivo codes (codes developed by the language of the participants) to analyze and categorize the data.

Creswell (2013) stated that this stage, "involves organizing the data, conducting a preliminary read-through of the database, coding, and organizing themes, representing data, and forming an interpretation of them" (p. 179). Preliminary processes for the developing categories involved honing in on the teacher's previous knowledge of students and classroom procedures and events.

After determining codes and patterns, I decided on the best methods to display findings that were easily read and interpreted. I used tables to display codes. I also broke down the data to show how codes were narrowed into themes.

As the researcher in this study and the teacher in this class, I gained an understanding of the dynamics that impact students' development of a writing culture. I used the lens of Foucauldian power dynamics to view my classroom from a different perspective. Looking in

detail at the writing culture and the students' writing provided insight into the ways students viewed the curriculum and writing as a whole.

CHAPTER 4. DATA ANALYSIS

The research took place in my fifth grade English language arts classroom during the 2017-2018 school year. Multiple sources of data were collected (see Table 3.1). The research questions were: 1) What is the nature of a writing culture in a fifth-grade writing classroom? 2) What are students' perceptions of writing in a fifth grade ELA classroom. Data analysis began after collecting the data. I read through curricular documents and teacher lesson plans. In this chapter, I detail the three themes that emerged in my research: Power and Control in the Writing Culture, Dissonance within the Curriculum, and Student Resistance.

Classroom Culture

The study was conducted in my fifth-grade classroom at Southeast Elementary. Southeast Elementary is a Title I school located in Lancaster County. When the original campus flooded in the Fall of 2016, Southeast was housed in temporary buildings behind Justice Place. My classroom was room 603, second room on the right, in the 600 hall that housed the school's fourth and fifth graders. The hallway consisted of twelve connected modular classrooms. The hallways were narrower than a traditional school building and had large, visible seams showing where the different modular buildings were connected. My classroom was separated from the fourth-grade classrooms by the water fountains and bathrooms. The classroom was done in a nautical theme and had flexible seating purchased through a classroom grant. The classroom seating stations included a table with chairs, yoga balls paired with lowered desks, a coffee table with yoga cushions, a standing station, a grouping of regular desks and chairs, and a seated station on a rug with balance disks for seats.

Students chose where they sat on a weekly basis. During the English language arts instructional time, they stayed at that station unless doing writing conferencing, peer editing, or group assignments. Table 4.1 shows my schedule for the 2017/2018 school year.

Table 4.1

Course	Time
Intervention	7:30-8:15
English Language Arts	8:15-8:30
Teacher Planning Period	8:30-9:00
Reading	9:00-9:45
English	9:45-10:45
Classes Switch	
Science (Hayes)	10:45-11:30
Lunch	11:30-11:50
Science (Hayes)	11:50-12:15
Classes Switch	
Science (Johnson)	12:15-1:15
Classes Switch	
Science (Homeroom)	1:15-2:15
English Language Arts	2:15-2:30

Logic of Inquiry

During the case study, I collected data from varying sources. Data collection is described in Table 1.1. To analyze such a large quantity of data, I read all of the documents twice and tabulated all of the documents.

All student writing samples and journals were retained as relevant data. Additionally, fifty pages of faculty meeting memos were relevant to the research question. My anecdotal notes were evaluated, and 20 pages were kept that pertained directly to writing curriculum and student writing.

Using Saldana (2016) as my guide, I began first cycle coding methods. I used In Vivo coding, descriptive coding, concept coding, attribute coding, and emotion coding. To gain a better understanding of the documents, I did a second cycle coding.

During my second reading of the data, I used the following coding methods: In Vivo coding, descriptive coding, concept coding, attribute coding, emotion coding, and focused coding. In Vivo coding allowed me to use the student's words. Descriptive coding provided a word or phrase that described a piece of data. Concept coding identified a key concept in the data. Attribute coding focused on categorizing elements of the data. Emotion coding focused on the explicit or implicit emotions indicated in a data source. Focused coding sorted codes into categories or themes. I color coded my codes and annotations on all of the data. My initial categories were: Expectations on the Teacher; Teacher Expectation of Students; Student Requests; Curriculum, Mandates from State and County Level; Writing Instruction, Challenges, and Writing Goals. From the categories, I grouped together Challenges, Writing Goals, and Teacher Expectations of Students under the Category "Writing is Hard", a category named by using In Vivo coding. Student requests became "Write what you know". Curriculum

Expectations became the category for "Expectations on Teachers, Curriculum, and Mandates from the State and Count".

Power and Control in the Writing Culture

Control from Governmental Entities

Classroom teachers did not make many of the day-to-day decisions about what was taught in classrooms in Lancaster County. While I had a vision and goals about what writing instruction would "look like" in my classroom, a review of teacher lesson plans and anecdotal notes showed me that I was unable to choose or implement many of these ideas. Decisions made at the state, county, and school levels trumped my goals. In the public-school setting, many aspects of a teacher's day are dictated and mapped out. Our schedules are made by administrators and approved by county school board personnel. Our standards are written at the county level but are dictated and overseen by the state. The federal government determines Title I Funds. Our classroom Ready Common Core workbook was chosen at the county level without a teacher committee. It is customary in our county to have a committee of teachers from different parts of the county evaluate any curriculum or program before it is adopted. For the last five years curriculum changes have been ushered in without teacher consultation.

The writing criteria are specified in a rubric written by the State Department of Education. Two former teachers who had been working in the school board office for several years wrote The County Writing Framework, *Hook, Line, and Sinker*. Neither of these educators taught in the current system of curricular reform for which they were advising. According the faculty meeting memos, *Hook, Line, and Sinker* had been implemented countywide. Our principal required its use although there was no research base behind the framework.

The administration chose the teacher resource where my writing prompts were found. It is a Common Core based writing guide entitled *Writing to the Core.* I have some choice in which passages I pull from the book; however, my gradebook is monitored by the county. According the Teacher Handbook, I am required to have a 70%/30% breakdown of Summative assessments (end of unit tests, final drafts, projects) and Formative assessments (quizzes, rough drafts, comprehension checks). Our administrators scrutinize our grade books and we are required to justify if we have an 'excessive number' of D's and F's; however, there is no written criteria to establish what counts as excessive.

Dissonance Within the Curriculum

The county has a Curriculum Portal that is available to teachers through Oncourse, our lesson planning website. The many changes of the past three years in the textbooks and materials for English language arts instruction can be seen in the Curriculum Portal. The goal of these changes was preparing students for testing. There was no set curriculum for Lancaster County. There was a scope and sequence and provided materials. After reviewing my lesson plans it was evident that while the county scope and sequence was supposed to guide my instructional planning, test preparation requirements left me with instructional plans guided by the test rather than assessment guided by instruction.

The standards used in Lancaster County were adapted from the Common Core state standards after the initial public outcry at the statewide implementation of Common Core standards. The state gave the county an option of using the state curriculum or of writing its own. The curriculum written by our county had to be submitted for state approval. The Common Core standards were adapted and divided into a scope and sequence by our county's curricular team. While the standards were divided into what is called 'units', the lessons were

not mapped out. Suggestions were provided, but it was a scope and sequence, a curriculum document that shows which standards should be covered, what sequence they should be taught in, and how long it should take a student to master the standard. From August to February of 2017-2018, I implemented units one through four of the scope and sequence. Each unit lasted four to six weeks, with the duration dependent upon standard complexity and schedule interruptions.

The table below shows the standards and objectives for Units 1 to 4 of the scope and sequence; the standards are abbreviated. For example, W 5.1 is writing standard one for grade five. Since I studied only the writing curriculum, the table includes only writing standards. Reading and listening standards for grade five are omitted from the table.

Table 4.3 Curriculum Unit Standards

Standards	Objectives
Unit 1- W 5.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, support point of view with reasons and information	Identify qualities of opinion pieces Develop a point of view Supply reasons, information, facts, and details to support an opinion
W 5.2 Write informative/explanatory text to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly	Identify qualities of informative/explanatory pieces Write informative/explanatory pieces with a predictable structure Employ facts, definitions, details, quotations, examples, and other information
W 5.4 Produce a clear and coherent writing in which the development of organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience	Produce clear and coherent writing Adapt writing to fulfill a specific purpose Adapt writing to most needs of an audience
W 5.5 With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a different approach	Use adult and peer guidance and support to strengthen writing Plan writing Revise writing Edit Writing Rewrite Try a different approach Produce writing that is well developed and strong
W 5.7 Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through different aspects of a topic	Use graphic organizer to record thoughts

(table cont'd.)

Standards	Objectives
Unit 2	
W 5.8 Recall relevant information from experiences of gather relevant sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources	Recall relevant information
W 5.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research	Analyze a prompt about a text to determine what it is asked Form ideas in response to a prompt about a text Support ideas with evidence from a text
W 5.10 Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of discipline specific tasks, purposes, and audiences	Complete various pieces of writing over varying lengths of time Organize clear and coherent pieces of writing for a variety of reasons and in a variety of settings
Unit 3	
W 5.6 With some guidance and support from adults, produce and publish grade appropriate writing using technology either independently or in collaboration with others	Use adult guidance and peer support Use technology to produce and publish writing Use keyboarding skills

Since the county developed the curriculum in 2013, two different standardized test reforms have been enacted by the state. Teacher lesson plans and curriculum documents show that classroom instruction has been modified to fit testing expectations. As a result, some of the writing standards in the curriculum have been pushed aside in English language arts classroom instruction to allow adequate time to prepare students for the writing format of the standardized test. The standards have become less important than testing. Faculty meeting memos, teacher anecdotal notes, and lesson plans documented that message has been sent. The test is more important than the standards.

In the county scope and sequence, Standard W 5.1 states, "Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information." This standard was in Unit 1, but teacher lesson plans for the months of August through October documented that it was not taught during the time allocated for Unit 1, which were the first four weeks of this study. The lack of teaching this standard was not intentional. The standardized test practice, and the actual standardized test, never ask the students for their opinion of a piece or of any other topic.

Students are asked on standardized tests to take on the voice of another character, to explain the point of view of an author, but they are not asked their opinion. This writing was eliminated from instruction due to necessity and time constraints.

Writing Standard W 5.2 states, "Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly." Teacher lesson plans and curriculum documents showed that students did many different informative and explanatory writing tasks throughout the school year. Part of the standard emphasizes, however, the use of illustrations and multimedia. Due to the time constraints in classroom instruction set by the county and administration, this was not done during the period of study.

Writing Standard W 5.7 requires students to, "Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge investigation of different aspects of a topic." Students completed multiple research style prompts during the study, however, students were not allowed to choose their research topics. The test took precedence over the students' needs and the teacher's goals.

Teacher lesson plans from August 2017 to February 2018 documented that the remaining standards (W. 4, W.6, W.8, W.9, W. 10) were taught throughout the semester. They were not always taught in the recommended order as classroom schedule changes and mandated writing testing changed the order in which the students practiced and worked to master these skills.

Power Dynamics in Standardized Testing

The concept of standardized testing is fraught with power dynamics. In the public education system, there is no escaping standardized testing; the standardized test is mentioned repeatedly in faculty meetings and curriculum handouts. Teacher anecdotal notes show that grades 3 to 5 were referred to as "the testing grades" in our faculty meetings. A portion of

intervention time each week was used to teach fifth graders to type solely for the purpose of testing.

Accountability requirements set by the state, in the form of A to F school grade ratings given based on their scores, teacher effectiveness ratings, and student evaluation all are mandated by the state. Teacher effectiveness ratings assign teachers a numerical score from 1 to 4. These scores match up with a description: a one is ineffective, two is emerging proficient, three is proficient, and four is highly effective. The power dynamic in this is the valuative assumption that a school's effectiveness can be measured by one test devised by entities outside of the school, the school system, and the county. A second valuative assumption is that one student test score and an observation can measure a teacher's effectiveness.

According to the State Teacher Evaluation Rubric, a One is ineffective, two is immerging proficient, three is immerging effective, and four is highly effective. Teachers are required to set two student learning targets (SLTs) based on the students' previous standardized test scores. Although a teacher writes her SLT, the language is scripted and the percentage bandwidths set for scores of 1 to 4 are monitored both by administration and the county. Administrators and school board personnel monitor teacher SLTs. Once the data is in for the teacher's SLT, she is required to sign off on her performance.

Teachers are not part of designing the curricular requirements or the standardized testing goals. The county chooses a curriculum based on the state-chosen standardized test, however, an instrument in which they have no input measures teachers.

All fifth-grade students attending public school in the state took the LEAP 360 test near the end of the 2017-2018 school year. Prior to the 2016-2017 school year, students took PARRC as their state assessment. While the state assessment has changed, curriculum documents

showed the expectations for the fifth-grade writing on these examinations was similar. The testing rubric and documents provided by the state detailed that students completed two different writing tasks of the three possibilities: literary analysis, narrative, or research. The type of task they received was not revealed until the day of the test.

For the literary analysis and narrative, students were given three pieces of text. Testing preparatory documents from the state testing site showed that the texts could be fiction or nonfiction. The types could consist of stories, play excerpts, excerpts from a chapter book, newspaper articles, magazine articles, letters, and/or Internet sources. Students were to read and comprehend these different sources before proceeding with the writing task. The fifth-grade literary analysis task asked students to interpret the literature provided. In the county scope and sequence, Standard W 5.9 aligned with these testing expectations: "Draw evidence from literary or informational text to support analysis, reflection, and research." A literary analysis task might ask students to determine and defend the author's point of view based on the two pieces of writing they read. For a narrative task, students might be asked to extend a story, take on the role of the story's characters, or to write about an experience described in one of the passages. The state test was not based on the curriculum and changes in the curriculum and the curricular documents provided evidence that the curriculum had been adapted to match the expectations of the state testing.

Test preparatory documents indicated that the fifth-grade research task required students to read three different sources. Sources might be fiction or nonfiction and could consist of stories, newspaper articles, magazine articles, letters, scientific documentation, and/or Internet sources. Students were then asked a question that required them to draw conclusions and use evidence from all of the sources to defend their answers. For example, students could have been

asked to explain the author's point of view in the sources. They could have been asked to synthesize the material from all three sources and draw conclusions based on it.

These tasks are complex. Teaching students to write in these formats requires a mastery of a variety of skills. To achieve success on any of three tasks, students must be able to do the following: write in complete sentences, write in complete paragraphs, read on grade level, understand how to read a variety of types of writing, annotate, use correct grammar and syntax, brainstorm, and understand how to read a writing task. Students arrive in fifth grade language arts class at different skill levels in all these areas. They are expected to have mastered writing sentences, paragraphs, to read fluently on grade level, and to interpret a writing prompt before fifth grade. Fluency testing scores and students' scores on previous year's standardized test show this is often not the case. Students' scores on the previous year's standardized testing show that some students were given scores of approaching basic, basic, mastery, or advanced on the previous year's English language arts test. The school and county identified writing as a weakness among the students entering the fifth grade for the 2017/2018 school year. Teacher lesson plans and intervention plans documented that teaching students to be successful in these skills was painstaking and laborious as these skills were taught continuously from August 2017 to February 2018. Teacher lesson plans also showed that much of the initial instructional time at the beginning of a school year must be spent on these skills for students to be successful.

Test driven instruction. Our first faculty meeting topic was based on testing. On August 8, 2017, we discussed how students' growth targets were set. Data meeting dates were set by the administrator. Faculty meetings memos and teacher anecdotal notes documented that the intervention model the county previously used had been altered to a 'push in' model for interventions. Initially interventions were designed to help students "catch up" in an area in

which they were weak. The decision to move to a 'push-in' model was made at the county level to boost student test scores and meant that instead of being pulled out for remediation or tutoring, the tutors, paraprofessionals, and teacher provided individualized lessons in the computer lab.

Our interventions were from 7:30-8:15 in the computer lab. Upon leaving the multipurpose building in the morning, students went directly to the lab. The fifth-grade students in this study had computer lab in the 400 hall, which was included for English Language Learner tutoring, computer labs, and the teacher workroom. The computer lab was a sparsely decorated room with foldable tables set up along all four walls. The students used basic Dell laptops.

During intervention time, students worked on the computer doing *Successmaker, Moby Max* science or social studies, *Moby Max* Math, or IBX math. Students practiced reading comprehension with the *Successmaker* program. According to faculty in-service handouts about the program, it was adaptive to the student's reading level and changed the questioning format to easier or more difficult based on the student's answers. The students read comprehension passages and answered accompanying questions.

Moby Max was a computer program with skill practice in various subject areas. The students could choose their topics or the type of practice including grammar, writing, reading comprehension. This program also allowed students to earn incentive virtual money for the virtual store or prizes. Students who were in in the process of being evaluated for special education (RTI) or English Language Learners (ELL) were pulled into small groups. Due to the RTI requirements, I was mandated to pull only one student for English language arts. I made the professional decision to pull all students at least once a week.

In the computer lab, I had twenty-two students who were pulled into groups of four or five students. Groups was based on the skills the students needed to improve as determined

student data from in class fluency testing, core phonics survey, last year's standardized testing results, and class assignments. Students received interventions from me or from one of the two paraprofessionals who worked in the lab. I wrote weekly lesson plans for intervention for ten different groups. Students were pulled for reading comprehension and for written expression. Since writing was identified as a weakness, I pulled all students weekly.

The schedule stated the time from 8:15-8:30 was for fifteen minutes of English language arts instruction. Teacher anecdotal notes indicated that it actually consisted of walking students to the 600 hall to unpack, classroom restroom/water break, students unpacking, socializing instead of unpacking, and me requesting smoothie money, permission slips, forms for the office, doctor's excuses, graded paper folders, daily folders, notes for parents, and the other classroom detritus that seemed to come in first thing in the morning. After transitioning students who left the room for English language arts instruction in the special education class, and taking roll, students began spelling, and were supposed to start their journal assignment. Frequently the number of morning tasks cut into our journal time. My anecdotal notes indicated these fifth-grade students were experts at stalling to avoid undesirable tasks. Anecdote from August 22, 2017 documented, "This is the strongest group of readers I've ever taught. But when it is time to write, everyone has a broken pencil or suddenly needs to go to the bathroom."

The students went to physical education class during my planning period. When the students returned, I checked spelling and began English and writing instruction. English and writing instruction were scheduled until 9:30 and then reading instruction was scheduled to begin. At 10:15, the students were scheduled to begin art. Although written into the official schedule, writing or reading instruction always took up this 30-minute period from 10:15-10:45.

The instructional minutes for English language arts including 20 minutes of lab time equaled 140 minutes. The time was split evenly between reading and writing time with 70 minutes for each. Teacher lesson plans and anecdotal notes showed, however, few weeks in a school year allowed for uninterrupted instructional minutes. The classroom instructional minutes were impacted by intervention time lost to mandated testing, fundraiser rallies, practice testing done in the classroom, student behavioral issues, teacher in-services, and skills that took longer than predicted to master.

Intervention lessons turned test prep.

Interventions were supposed to be skill lessons and practice that enable a student to "catch up" on any skills they have not mastered. When I pulled students into intervention groups, the time was split between reading and written expression interventions. I was required to turn in weekly logs, known as intervention plans, that showed which students were pulled for groups and on what days. I saw each homeroom student in my written expression group weekly from August to February except for weeks of mandated testing (see Table 4.4). My intervention plans show that written expression interventions consisted of grammar lessons, practice writing introduction and body paragraphs, practice annotating passages connected to writing prompts, and practice analyzing writing prompts.

During written expression interventions, I worked with students on multiple skills. Writing was identified as a weakness by the previous year's standardized testing scores. Due to this data and the complexity of the writing tasks required by the standardized test and administration, I pulled all students into a small group. My interventions plans documented the first writing skill was writing prompt analysis. The detailed nature of the writing prompts given to students required the use of direct instruction. I used the RAFT technique- Role, Audience,

Format, and Topic- to help them analyze the prompts. This allowed students to understand and analyze what they were expected to accomplish in their writing task.

My notes on my intervention plans indicated that in the beginning, all students needed teacher scaffolding with this instruction. We started by analyzing the prompt together. August 22nd anecdotal notes documented, "All students needed guidance to analyze writing prompts." Students worked with partners to analyze prompts; by the third group session, they analyzed prompts on their own.

Students also practiced annotating passages and writing introductory paragraphs during intervention instruction. Intervention plans documented that written expression interventions evolved into a time for writing conferences. Mandated state test practice and county benchmark testing took up a significant portion of the time set aside for intervention. The dates where intervention was replaced by testing were documented through intervention plans and faculty meeting handouts. Table 4.4 shows the dates of intervention and how they were used.

Table 4.4

Dates	Intervention Activities
August 7-31	No intervention instruction, mandated assessment
September 4-8	No intervention instruction, mandated assessment
September 11-15	Worked on analyzing writing prompts
September 18-22	Analyze writing prompts, sample brainstorms
September 25-19	Student writing analysis
October 2-6	Writing Conferences
October 9-13	Writing conferences

(table cont'd.)

Dates	Intervention Activities
October 16-20	Writing conferences
October 23-24	STAR, Reading/Math Prog. Monitoring, No Intervention
October 25-27	Successmaker, Mandated LEAP 360 No Intervention
October 30-November 3	Mandated LEAP 360
November 6, 7, 9, 10	Writing Conferencing
November 8th	Teachers sent to training No Intervention
November 13-17	Tech. Team reimages all computers No Intervention
November 27-December 1	Writing Conferencing, Main Ideas, Editing
December 4-8	Writing conferencing, Main Ideas, Editing
December 11-15	Writing conferencing, Main Ideas, Editing

Data Meetings Disguised as Faculty Meetings

Traditionally, school faculty meetings focus on a variety of topics: positive behavior incentives, school activities throughout the year, motivating the staff. At Southeast, a number of faculty meetings focused on standardized testing and analyzing data to prepare for standardized testing. Faculty meetings for the Fall of 2017 started for teachers in the two days before students returned. In August 2017, the faculty meeting memo showed that one of the first targets of the meeting was data analysis. The primary purpose of data meetings was to prepare students for state standardized testing. Individual areas of weakness determined by the previous year's standardized test were discussed as was how we planned to address it instructionally. We

analyzed the areas in which students were weakest. Teacher anecdotal notes from the faculty meeting documented that the previous year's standardized testing data indicated that for fifth grade, the weaknesses were conceptualizing how chapters fit together in a longer text, reading and comprehending literature on the high end of the fifth grade spectrum, summarizing, comparing the structures of the texts, explaining an author's point of view, and reading and comprehending informational text on the high end. Anecdotal notes showed that the teachers discussed writing as a weakness across the school. Of the skills discussed, reading narrative and informational text are vital for students to succeed at writing prompts on the LEAP 360. Students also needed to be able to explain an author's point of view and might be asked to compare text structure.

Teachers met in small groups and for various purposes throughout the semester. In September, a faculty meeting emphasized the upcoming literacy night. We were told parent testing strategy packets for testing were due in early November so that they could be sent to the printer. We were told to emphasize social studies expository text because of the new version of the state social studies test. Faculty meeting notes and documents indicated that every grade level teacher was required to turn in instructional strategies they were emphasizing based on the curriculum and test preparation.

In October, LEAP 360 Diagnostic (practice testing) was the topic of discussion at our faculty meeting. According the meeting agenda, the meeting was to discuss test procedure, testing tickets, and accommodations, and would be held during our intervention time; this is first thing in the morning for fifth grade. My anecdotal notes showed that there was an intense discussion about how the students testing for two or three hours for every morning would impact

the rest of the instructional week and student motivation. We discussed the practice testing amongst ourselves.

> Teacher 1: "What the hell is this going to do to the rest of our instructional day?"
>
> Teacher 2: "It's shot."
>
> Me: "We won't get any work out of them. They will be exhausted." (Teacher anecdotal Notes, p. 15).

Testing Results Driving Writing Instruction

Teacher lesson plans documented classroom instructional time incorporated lessons on grammar, note taking, the writing process (brainstorm, rough draft, edit, revise, final draft), and writing skills with which the students as a whole were having difficulty. One of the county required instructional tools was the *Reading Common Core* test preparation book. The *Reading Common Core* book was a 400-page workbook intended to serve as our reading comprehension, writing, and grammar source. Teacher lesson plans showed that once a week, I had to use writing time to prepare students for the state mandated testing and to ensure students practiced some of the skills covered by the workbook (reading and responding to informational text, prepositional phrases, analyzing author's point of view, etc.). The county officially removed the book from its curriculum name after initial public outcry against it, however the standards remained.

Initially, I planned on students journaling daily. Students required more and more assistance with the stringency of the state required writing prompts. Teacher anecdotal notes from October 2017 stated, "After multiple class periods spent on writing, students are not making the progress I hoped." I attempted to make the prompts appealing. My lesson plans showed that analyzing the writing prompt was a lengthy process. The teacher anecdotal notes

indicated that the difficulty level of the passages provided in our *Writing to the Core* writing resource were the problem. Our class usually spent two writing sessions reading and annotating the passages before beginning the brainstorming phase of the writing process.

Student Resistance and Challenges

Intervention Instruction over Time

All my homeroom students were pulled weekly for writing interventions that was intended to assist students whom teachers thought needed reteaching or in catching up on skills in which they were weak. Instead, intervention lesson plans showed that the time was used for test preparatory writing.

I pulled students into group with me for 30 minutes per session. Students not pulled by the interventionist or me participated in computer-based instruction. During the semester of this study, the schedule experienced multiple interruptions. Of the 17 weeks available for interventions, seven of 17 were taken up by mandatory testing. Students were tested by various methods. Our administration required each student to be tested using a Core Phonics Survey; Teachers and students were not allowed to opt out of any of the testing, which impacted classroom instruction by taking away some of the small group instruction within the day. Power dynamics were evident here.

The Code Phonics Survey evaluated a student's ability to recognize letters and decode sounds. Students were also fluency tested. Fluency tests required students to read a fifth-grade level passage for one minute. Students were also tested using STAR, which evaluated them in reading comprehension. Our county required a benchmark assessment that was written at the county level, and which students were required to take in the fall, midyear, and the spring. This assessment was a determinant in student retention, as well as grades, LEAP scores, and

attendance. The state mandated that LEAP 360 practice test and test tool trainings be administered.

Table 4. 5 Intervention

Dates	Intervention Activities
August 7-31	No intervention instruction, mandated assessment
September 4-8	No intervention instruction, mandated assessment
September 11-15	Worked on analyzing writing prompts
September 18-22	Analyze writing prompts, sample brainstorms
September 25-19	Student writing analysis
October 2-6	Writing Conferences
October 9-13	Writing conferences
October 16-20	Writing conferences
October 23-24	STAR, Reading/Math Prog. Monitoring
October 25-27	Successmaker, Mandated LEAP 360
October 30-November 3	Mandated LEAP 360
November 6, 7, 9, 10	Writing Conferencing
November 8th	Teachers sent to training
November 13-17	Tech. Team reimages all computers
November 27-December 1	Writing Conferencing, Main Ideas, Editing
December 4-8	Writing conferencing, Main Ideas, Editing
December 11-15	Writing conferencing, Main Ideas, Editing

Intervention plans documented that the remaining allocated writing time in lab was spent teaching students to read and interpret writing prompts, to analyze their own writing, to edit their writing, to find and write main ideas and supporting details, and to participate in group and individual writing conferences. These skills were essential parts of the writing curriculum and

test preparation and necessitated push back into classroom instruction. The volume of intervention time taken up by testing mandated by the administration, county, and state took away from classroom instructional time. This pulled time from teacher modeling and student peer editing, important components of writing instruction. During intervention time in the lab, anecdotal notes were collected on students' progress and struggles throughout the instruction of different skills. I discuss these notes based on the skill or mode of instruction.

Writing is Hard

Power from state entities required that students take the LEAP 360 examination in third through fifth grades. The LEAP 360 examination required students to write a narrative, research task, and/or literary analysis after reading two or three passages of varying types. To do this successfully, the students must be able to comprehend the passages and the writing prompt. The prompt is often multiple paragraphs and peppered with bulleted points or multiple-choice questions to be addressed in student writing. Teaching this skill requires extensive modeling, one-on-one, and small group instruction. The power dynamics can be seen in the way instruction was planned. It was not based on the scope and sequence. Instructional planning was not based on teacher writing goals but rather it was based on testing preparation requirements. During the month of September, students worked on writing prompt analysis in the Intervention lab with the goal of moving them into an actual writing piece.

I used RAFT (Role, Audience, Format, Topic) to provide students with a guide to interpret their writing prompt. Role is the point of view from which the student writes; often they write as themselves, but sometimes they are asked to take on the role of a character from one of the passages they have read. Audience was frequently their teacher or simply the person grading the standardized test although they might be asked to write a letter or address a specific

person or character. As for format, students are required to write in various formats including writing a letter, newspaper article, blog post, a story, or an essay. Topic refers to what they are writing about.

Participants

My homeroom class consisted of 24 students last year. While I taught science to the entire fifth grade of seventy students, I only taught English language arts to my homeroom. Of those students, twelve were pulled for a portion of the English language arts block into the special education room. I excluded the twelve students who were not included in the case study due to the difficulty of collecting certain data sources from them. Of the remaining students, I choose two striving writers (Dee and Leonard), two average writers (Baylor and Justin), and two above average writers (Grace and Julie). Their classifications as a striving, average, or above average writers were determined by their performance on the benchmark assessments and their writing prompts submitted in class. They were also chosen because their attendance was not problematic. A more detailed description of students can be found in Chapter 3.

Striving Students

Dee was a ten-year-old female. She struggled as a writer, scoring C's and D's on her writing. While she worked very hard in class, the gradebook showed that she made a combination of A's, B's, and C's. She cried over interactions with her classmates, but she typically managed to address them with the other students without adult intervention (Teacher anecdotal notes, p. 2).

Leonard was an eleven-year-old male. Student writing samples showed that he struggled as a writer, scoring C's and D's on his assignments. His English language arts grade remained high due to his grades in reading comprehension and spelling. He had many friends and was

chosen for group work and activities first by his classmates (Teacher anecdotal notes, p. 2). From parent/teacher conference day, I knew that he was an only child. Anecdotal notes showed that he sought much attention both from his teachers and his peers.

Average Students

Baylor was an eleven-year-old male. He was an average writer, scoring B's and C's on his assignments. His identical twin brother was in another fifth-grade homeroom. The two had a close relationship with very little conflict between them (Teacher anecdotal notes, p. 3).

Justin was a ten-year-old, male student. He was an average writer, scoring B's and C's on writing assignments. His test scores from the previous school year showed that Justin was high academically, but he was disorganized and forgetful.

Above Average Students

Julie was a quiet, intelligent, temperamental, eleven-year-old female. As a writer, she was the highest in my class; she scored A's on all writing assignments.

Grace was a ten-year-old female. She was a high-level writer, scoring all A's on writing assignments. Grace was voted Student of the Year and was the only straight A student in her homeroom. She was a competitive cheerleader and hard worker. While she sometimes stressed over large assignments, she maintained an overall sunny disposition. (Teacher anecdotal notes, p. 3)

Challenges in Writing

Intervention time became an instrumental part of my writing instruction as I met with writing groups. Leonard, Grace, Justin, and Baylor were successful with RAFT after an initial teacher modeling (Intervention log, p. 2-4). Of Leonard, Grace, Justin, Baylor, and Grace, I wrote, "Did not struggle to analyze the prompt." Grace transitioned well into the narrative topic.

Teacher notes indicated her story was “Creative and well planned out”. Leonard had several “grammatical issues and very little description”. He had written a second rough draft for another round of conferencing. While Baylor seemed to understand the prompt, anecdotal notes on his writing prompt for his first narrative show that he reverted to *Hook, Line, and Sinker*, the county’s writing framework. The writing framework was designed for students writing expository and research writing and was not designed for narratives. Baylor’s first full draft was “only two paragraphs” (Intervention log, p. 3-4).

Dee needed guidance throughout the writing process. She forgot one of the fundamental aspects of the topic and was unable to complete her rough draft. She “had to restart, analyze the plot”. After working with Dee to break down the passages that were read and the writing prompt, she completed a rough draft (Intervention log, p. 5-6).

Julie was insecure about the writing process. She understood the passages, but she needed guidance through RAFT and the planning process. After receiving guidance, notes indicated she was successful with completing a rough draft for her narrative (Intervention log, p. 5-6).

In September, students received a test preparatory writing prompt that would become part of the school’s 4-H exhibit at the County fair. The prompt consisted of two nonfiction passages about our country’s history with automobiles. Lesson plans showed that after reading and annotating the passages in class, the students met in intervention groups for writing conferences. Grace successfully wrote on the topic and included all necessary components. Baylor, who preferred research task to narrative (Student interviews, p. 1), produced as effective piece on the assignment as well. Leonard wrote more complex paragraphs and sentences than in his previous assignments. Justin wrote a paragraph of his rough draft but was unable to finish; Justin

"struggled to develop a long enough writing piece" (Intervention log, p. 10). Dee needed some scaffolding. She struggled with some of the passage's complexity and with planning her writing. She successfully completed her writing with this assistance. Julie's writing showed that she completed her rough draft with all its necessary components (Intervention logs, p. 11).

The remainder of October and most of November were spent in county mandated benchmark assessments, state mandated LEAP practice, and STAR assessments. I was unable to pull groups in lab for a month, which caused a push back in my classroom, resulting in more class time being taken up with small groups and fewer opportunities for teacher modeling (Teacher anecdotal notes, p. 6).

In late November, I resumed writing conferences, working on finding and writing the main idea and supporting details from a text and editing. We prepared for the literary analysis portion of the LEAP 360. Leonard struggled with note-taking and needed guidance through his introduction. "He was successful once his body paragraphs began" (Intervention log, p. 12). Grace, Justin, and Baylor experienced the same struggles. Dee was able to read the passages fluently and with comprehension. She wrote a successful introduction using the county writing framework, however, she had major sequencing and organization issues once she reached the body paragraphs. Julie was "bored and continuously had to be refocused" through the entire process (Intervention logs, p. 13).

Instruction in writing prompt analysis, note taking, and writing introductions was a painstaking and lengthy process. Instructionally, I had hoped to be well past this by the first semester's close. Constant schedule changes and the use of intervention time solely for assessments (typically state and county mandated) consumed considerable time of these instructional minutes; I was powerless to change these factors. While I began to see some

progress with students in October, the nearly month of assessment, anecdotal notes, and writing samples showed that Dee was held back from a level achievement she might have reached with more guided practice. My anecdotal notes showed that although Julie was never a fan of writing, she was openly resentful by the end of the semester. Students were required to do full length writing passages and constructed responses during every day of benchmark and LEAP 360 practice testing.

Reducing Writing to a Formulaic Checklist

Writing is meant to be an expressive, recursive experience, a form of self-expression and conveying information. These aspects of writing are difficult to quantify and, as a result, the state department created a writing rubric (see Appendix C). This rubric quantifies aspects of writing such as grammar and the more amorphous quality of voice. The County Writing Framework *Hook, Line, and Sinker* was designed solely to help students be successful in writing informational text for testing.

In Lancaster County, several schools implemented this writing framework (see Appendix B), including Southeast Elementary in grades two through five. The purpose of this framework was to prepare students for the writing prompt on the state standardized test. Two former teachers who worked in the curriculum department at the school board developed this framework, but it was not research based.

My anecdotal notes captured an interaction between one of the framework's creators and our staff. Mrs. Talbot, one of the developers, was introducing the framework to a small group of teachers. It was an October school day, and five other teachers at Southeast and I had been pulled from instructional time to be trained.

"Good morning, everyone," Mrs. Talbot began. "I am the designer of this writing framework. I want to apologize to all of you. It's October, and I am just getting here to train you. You have wasted three months of instruction."

I felt my face flush as I stared at this presenter in disbelief. I wanted to retort that I had obviously wasted the last twelve years of instruction as well since I was just being "trained" to teach writing, but I did not respond (Teacher journal, p. 4).

While the framework was new to me, the fifth graders who were part of this study during the 2017/2018 school year had used it regularly since third grade. My administrator had mandated that all the teachers were trained in this 'program' to implement it. I had expressed my concerns about the 'program' and the issues I recognized in students who had been trained with this program and entered the fifth grade. Students who entered the fifth grade after using this framework believed that every writing assignment had four paragraphs. The following anecdotal notes helped explain this.

Mrs. Talbot asked, "Who can tell me how many paragraphs are in a narrative?"

Wide-eyed, I responded, "It depends on what you are writing about."

Mrs. Talbot, "There are four."

"The students are unable to get past this. With every writing assignment they are given, someone once again will ask, 'Is this four paragraphs?'" (Teacher journal, p. 4). Other issues included the cut and dried way the students write. Since each paragraph in the framework is scripted, anecdotal notes from interventions and student writing showed there was little voice development in the writing I initially received. Even after working with students to break this cycle, they often reverted to the formulaic style of writing during individual writing time.

The power dynamic in this is clear. We take students' creative voices away and tell them what their voice should sound like. Teacher opinion and feedback have not been factors in adopting this framework or in curriculum decisions or changes. When I had questioned its use, the framework was credited with increasing our test scores, although there was no data to credit the framework directly with the increases. The faculty handbook showed that the teachers in every testing grade (third through fifth) had changed over the past three years. The standardized testing company changed as well, thus it was impossible to attribute any statistical change in scores to the framework. In spite of this evidence, my anecdotal notes showed that Southeast's administrator did not listen to my protests of the framework. While I backed up these protests with student writing samples and the issues it caused in fifth grade writing, my words met with silence.

My hopes for what writing culture would look like in my classroom were not met. I hoped to create an open dialogue about writing with students. I wanted to create a culture of writers. The culture that I witnessed was one of silence. My voice as a teacher was suppressed and silenced by the mandates of the state, the county, and my administrators. The curriculum, the writing curriculum, the testing mandates, and even I suppressed my students' voices. Despite my desires as a teacher, I became an instrument of oppression in implementing and carrying out the hidden curriculum of the system. The hidden curriculum was concerned only with testing scores.

Dissonance in Student Perceptions of Writing

Student Resistance to Writing Topics

One of the main goals of the writing curriculum involved students writing about a variety of topics and in a variety of formats. Lesson plans documented that in the beginning of the

semester, students studied fairy tales, legends, and myths and Greek mythology. While the county enforced a writing curriculum and followed the state rubric, there was no textbook for writing. Southeast Elementary chose to purchase a Common Core resource for teachers that included a set of passages with accompanying prompts; teachers were not consulted about preferences for writing resources. For the first prompt students were required to read two myths and then write their own myth incorporating elements from the two readings. One of the myths was "How Butterflies Came to Be", and the other myth was "Why Swans are White." The students worked on these myths for two weeks (Lesson plans, September 2017).

Our second writing assignment was to be part of the school's 4-H display at the county fair. The students read two expository pieces on cars, "Comparing Now and Then: An Overview of How Cars (Drastically) Changed Human Lives" by Mireille Mayrand-Fiset and "When Cars Fly" by Ian Bogost. Teacher lesson plans and anecdotal notes showed that both passages were difficult for the students who had one week of classroom writing time to finish their essays. They had to answer questions two questions: "How has the development of cars had an impact on our daily lives?" and "How will the future of cars impact us?"

When we finished the mandatory 4-H essay, students read the myth of "Pandora's box". They then rewrote the myth from Pandora's point of view during a week of classroom writing instruction (Lesson plans, September and October 2017).

For their cave writing assignment, students read the informational passage, "The Wonders of Caves". For their writing prompt, students completed a narrative about their experience exploring a cave. Two weeks of in class writing time were devoted to this assignment.

In their Ready Common core workbook, students read passages on a variety of topics. After reading different types of passages, students were asked to do literary analysis on certain elements of the passage or the author's intent and point of view.

For the science task, students read a diagram and a short passage about their Earth's tilt on its axis. They read an additional diagram showing the movement of carbon dioxide and water through photosynthesis and a diagram of the photosynthesis/respiration cycle. Students then had to explain how these topics were interrelated. They were given two class periods to complete these.

The students were asked to complete a variety of social studies tasks throughout the year. Their topics included Christopher Columbus, the Columbian Exchange, and Ancient Civilizations, topics about which they had learned in class. Students had two class periods to complete these essays.

For their writing topic about Australia, students read two expository nonfiction passages, "Life in Australia" and "Facts About Australia". The students then wrote about why someone might choose to move to Australia. The students had a week of writing instructional periods to complete their final drafts.

The emoji story was one of the few extensive free writes the students were allowed to do throughout the year. While they were required to incorporate emoji stickers into their writing, they were allowed to choose their topic and their length. This took one class period of writing instructional time.

The writing assignment about microbes required students to read two scientific articles on the topics of microbes and bacteria. After reading these articles, students had to decide whether

they thought microbes were beneficial or harmful. Students were given a week's writing instructional time to complete their microbe's essay.

For their essay on snakes, students read a passage entitled "Natural Mimics". Students were asked to compare and contrast the Arizona coral snake and the coral king snake and had two weeks of classroom writing instructional time to complete their work.

The final writing of the semester required students to write a narrative incorporating characters from two different narratives. Students read "Geography Bee", about a girl who had to have perseverance to overcome an academic obstacle, and "The Crow and the Pitcher" from *Aesop's Fables.* Two weeks of in class writing time were allotted for completing their final draft (Lesson plans, August to December 2017).

What Writing Makes Visible

Students completed multiple journal assignments, narrative prompts, and expository writing pieces throughout the semester. The following discussion addresses student journals and writing samples.

Dee.

Dee's journals typically were brief. When she was asked to write about Southeast Elementary, her writing consisted of three sentences. In a free write about exercise, her writing consisted of five sentences, and she used the county's writing framework to construct it. In several of her journals, she was asked to write about the novel The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe from the perspective of one of the characters. Each of these samples involved basic sentence structure and no developed description or student voice. The only two journals that served as exceptions were her journals on her baby dolls and one on our snow day. She began her baby doll paragraph using the county writing format although the students had been

instructed not to use this on journals. However, by sentence three she used descriptions and wrote more freely. She was most relaxed as a writer in her journal about the snow.

Dee turned in all but two writing assignments. She had the flu and was absent from school during the cave writing assignment. I exempted her from the Pandora writing assignment. Anecdotal notes documented that writing was such an extensive process for Dee that I allowed her to finish drafting another assignment in place of the Pandora writing.

Students grappled with the texts for the cars writing assignment and Dee needed assistance this task. After the classroom assistance with this prompt and my pulling her into lab to work through drafting with her, she only was able to produce a three-paragraph final draft for which she used the county writing framework. Her first paragraph was, "Cars have been used in many different ways. The come in many shapes and sizes. Both paragraphs involve cars. Next, I will write about how cars have impacted our lives, and how they help us." Dee was unable to personally connect with the passages or the writing prompt (Intervention logs, p. 15; Student writing, p. 5).

Dee had similar difficulty with the myth writing. Myths were part of the reading curriculum and included in chapter book we were reading, so students had read several myths and discussed them in depth before this writing was assigned. For this assignment, students read the Norse myth "Why Swans are White and the Native American myth "How Butterflies Came to Be". Dee and I met in the lab and during class for a writing conference. She had to write two different rough drafts before she was able to produce a final draft. With editing and conferencing, however, she was able to produce an in-depth piece of writing (Intervention log, p. 14). Dee's first draft was mostly copied descriptions from the narratives she had read, such as "It was a sunny summer day when a creator was watching the children of the village as they played.

A long time ago, Asgard was the home of the gods." Students were allowed to quote directly from passages in the literary analysis and research prompts, however, in the narrative, they were to weave threads from that story into their own. This is difficult to explain to elementary students and I guided her towards more of her writing in the second draft. In her second draft, her paragraphs were better connected. After helping with organization, she composed a three paragraph, descriptive, well-ordered narrative. Her narrative read:

> It was a sunny summer day. A Creator was watching the children of the village as they played. The Creator's heart was heavy thinking of the children getting older as the seasons passed. The Creator was a little distracted by the sunlight and shadows dancing on the ground and by yellow leaves twisting in the wind (Student writing, p. 10).

In Dee's other writing assignments on snakes, Common Core Practice, and science tasks, she continued to struggle with organization and processing the information for each prompt. Her writing was typically minimalistic and showed little voice development. Dee required extensive conferencing and editing with other writing assignments.

For the snake writing task, myth, and cave writing, students filled out a writing conference page. Students cited areas in which they still needed help in as well as how they felt about their writing (Intervention log, p. 15). Dee wrote, "I don't know" for two of the writing assignments and, "all of it" to explain what she needed help on. Regarding how she felt about her writing, she either did not respond or answered that she felt "bad" about it. "The first thing I want to talk about is the Arizona snake. The snake is highly species. This snake also lives in different parts of Arizona and Mexico. It has large rings of red and black." (Student writing, p. 19)

Dee's free writing and her social studies task were exceptions to her "bad" feelings. Dee's free write was a story about a little girl discovering her missing family. While there were

organizational issues, she experimented with dialogue. Parts of the story exhibited emotion and original ideas. Dee's free write started, "There was this little girl. She was friendly, but no one wanted to play or talk to her. They called her all kinds of names and bullied her. She was lonely" (Student writing, p. 75).

Dee's social studies task writing was more organized. She used some authority in her writing voice, and her assignment was above the minimum length. The second paragraph of her task stated:

> There were many positive things that happened during the Columbian Exchange. One thing that happened during the Columbian Exchange was that they made new businesses. Also, the horses and live stocks were introduced to the Americas. Their hunting and traveling improved (Student writing, p. 70).

Unlike portioned writing tasks that require students to assimilate large amounts of information quickly, Dee's social studies task was about a unit studied in class. It involved concepts on which she had been tested and of which thought she had some mastery. When writing her content area writing pieces, she was more confident, however, she strictly adhered to the county writing framework using a four-sentence introduction, two five-sentence body paragraphs, and a three-sentence conclusion regardless of the topic.

Leonard.

Leonard was an excellent reader. He did not struggle with the texts and overall did not struggle in comprehending the writing prompts. His journals tended to be brief. In his summary of part of the class's chapter book Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief, his sentences primarily consisted of three to four words. Frequently, Leonard asked for assignment length to be clarified. He was a late starter on assignments, often stalling until time ran out. I conferenced with Leonard and occasionally made him stay in and miss the beginning of PE class until his

journal was completed. This yielded some progress, and he wrote multiple paragraphs on most journals after these initial meetings (Intervention log, p. 20; Teacher anecdotal notes, p. 10).

Leonard completed his myth writing assignment in only two drafts. He resorted to the county writing framework, which was ill suited for narrative. His story development and descriptions were minimal and, as with many journals, he met the bare minimum writing requirement. His myth started, "The reason there is a rainbow is because Asgard brought all of the colors down from Earth. Then, the goddess of Asgard squeezed them together. The creator colored the Colors. When it rains, gods of Asgard are angry because of the rain" (Student writing samples, p. 15).

Writing samples showed that Leonard failed to address large aspects of the writing prompt in his rush to complete his assignments. He did this in this Australia writing assignment; he wrote a minimalistic description of the country but failed to address why someone might wish to move there. He wrote, "Australia is one of the most well-known places on Earth. It is also one of the wealthiest countries in the world. It has many wonders. There are multiple reasons Australia is interesting" (Student writing sample, p. 28). His story development improved when writing about caves, but he failed to address some of the details of the prompt. The prompt required students to write a story about spelunking using details from the passages. Leonard wrote:

> One dark and scary night, me and my friend were exploring a mountain where we came Across a hole. So, we went to follow the light and it was gone. We followed it. We thought it was leading to something good. But it smelled dead. It was a dead mountain lion. We ran and found our way out (Student writing samples, p. 50).

Leonard's tendency to make his writing as short and stripped down as possible continued throughout a variety of writing assignments. His free write was an exception. He chose to write

about sports and, for the approximate 10 minutes allotted for journals, he produced a fair amount of writing. His paragraphs were descriptive, and he seemed invested in his topic.

Leonard wrote with more authority on his social studies task. The students had spent considerable class time mastering the topic and Leonard wrote more than the minimum four paragraphs without his usual complaining. Leonard wrote, "Livestock and horses were introduced to the Americas. The Europeans taught the Native Americans their language. The most important food was maize. The horses helped improve hunting. The cattle improved farming. They also had new resources." (Student writing samples, p. 80)

Leonard's best example of expository writing was about snakes. His writing was just over three paragraphs but all of it was his words. He used the writing framework, which resulted in a first paragraph that read, "A snake is an animal with no arms and legs. Some are poisonous. Some are not. Two snakes that mimic each other are the King Coral Snake and the Arizona Coral Snake" (Student writing samples, p. 61). I discouraged this type of writing in class, but students frequently returned to it as a safety net (Teacher anecdotal notes, p. 9). Leonard responded on his writing conference forms that he needed help "making it longer" or "to make better sentences". He usually responded that he felt "okay" about his writing.

Despite Leonard's complaints about writing, he surprised some of his classmates when he won the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) essay contest. The students spent an hour a week during the fall learning about the dangers of drug abuse, alcohol abuse, peer pressure, bullying, and social media. The students responded positively to the DARE officer who came to our classroom (Teacher anecdotal notes, p. 10). Leonard was the essay contest winner from our homeroom and read his essay aloud. He felt empowered by his topic because he wrote something he knew and something that was relevant to him.

***Justin*.**

Justin was the strongest male writer in the study. He was also one of the only students who did not routinely complain about assignments; he simply did not complete some of them. Justin did not complete his snake writing, Australia piece, Common Core writing, or his science task. Justin sometimes started these pieces but was unable to locate them during the final draft. One day when students were turning in assignments, I recorded our conversation when I called him up:

"Justin, where is your writing assignment?"

He replied, "You know, I've been busy. I just did not get to it."

Justin's myth was slightly shorter than minimal length but included dialogue and descriptions (Intervention log, p. 10), and he exhibited the adequate story development. Justin wrote, "One sunny day, the Creator felt sad. 'There is not enough color,' he said. 'I need those colors and have them for my own.' He laughed evilly. So, he went one by one and took each color" (Student writing samples, p. 12).

His emoji story did not have good organization, but it was descriptive. In his social studies task, his writing was longer than minimum length and was descriptive. He exhibited excellent sentence structure, emerging voice, and wrote with authority. He wrote,

> The weapons people brought from the new land were guns, knives, swords, cannons, and axes. These helped them kill food and to protect them. Animals were a food source for the Europeans. The fur was used for clothes and hats. Plants were used to make new materials and as food. They also made coffee tea, and chocolate (Student writing samples, p. 82).

Although he was hesitant to write on the topics provided in class, Justin turned in the longest writing piece that I received during the entire data collection period. He turned in a free write piece that was over three typed pages. After writing in class, Justin took it home and typed

it on his own time. His story was the first chapter of a book he was writing. It was descriptive, included extensive dialogue, and showed story development. He was proud of his piece and shared it voluntarily with his classmates (Teacher anecdotal notes, p. 12). When I asked Justin how he felt about his story, he said, "I feel awesome. It was just pouring out of me" (Student interviews, p. 15).

Baylor.

Baylor completed all his in class writing assignments. Baylor's writing sample and anecdotal notes showed that his myth writing required extensive conferencing. His story development was skeletal. Baylor wrote, "Long ago, the sun and rain came and said, 'We need color. I will supply rain,' Rain said. Later that day, they gave rain and sun. The Creator created the rainbow" (Student writing sample, p. 16). He had similar issues with each of his narratives. While he used good descriptive language in his emoji story and his Pandora writing, anecdotal notes and writing samples showed that he struggled throughout with story structure.

Baylor used the county writing framework in his expository pieces and thus his microbes, car, and Common Core pieces were minimalistic. In his microbe piece, he wrote, "Microbes can be harmful. They can cause strep, and the flu. It can cause serious diseases and even death. They can be harmful to people and animals. Next, I will be talking about how microbes are helpful" (Student writing samples, p. 85).

While his writing was factual, it provided little evaluation or voice development. Baylor remained confident despite the limitations of his writing. On his writing conference sheets, Baylor always wrote that he needed help with "Nothing" and that he felt "Good" about his writing. About cars he wrote:

Cars have evolved since Henry Ford created the first car. They have deeply changed the

> outlook of our world. They have made it easy to travel. When the assembly line was created, it was easier to create them. Yet, cars created solutions. (Student writing sample, p. 3)

In his science and social studies tasks, Baylor did not use the county writing framework. His writing was longer than minimal length and he wrote with emerging voice. His writing showed more confidence, his writing structure was better, and he wrote with some authority on his topics. Baylor wrote:

> The Earth tilts on its axis. The axis is the imaginary line through Earth. Earth had seasons because its axis is tilted and because it orbits the sun. December is when the sun shines directly on the Southern hemisphere. In March, the sun shines equally on the Northern and Southern hemisphere (Student writing sample, p. 78).

Grace.

Grace completed every writing assignment during the semester of research. Writing sample show her skills as a writer were strong. Writing samples showed that she used the county framework introduction in her myth writing. Grace experimented with dialogue in the story, however, and demonstrated emerging voice. She showed good story organization and addressed the different portions of the prompt. Grace wrote:

> A long time ago in the land of Asgard, there was a Creator that was an artist. There was Also, goddesses who were known as Narns. My name is Grader, and I'm the princess of Asgard. My parents are Queen Isabella and King Leager. This is a story of how Rainbows come after it rains.
> One day, the Creator was making a colorful painting for the god and goddess who were getting married. When he was making it, the god who was marrying the next day, frightened him, and the paint brush flung into the air and made an upside-down U shape with all the different colors (Student writing samples, p. 8).

In research writing assignments, Grace reverted to the county writing framework. Her writing pieces in this genre were shorter and tended to follow the number of sentences per paragraph model provided by the county. Grace comprehended the passages and the writing prompt requirements, correctly used quotes from the story, and answered the required questions.

However, Grace used little evaluation or discussion. She wrote, "In the story, 'Comparing Now and Then', it says 'The vast majority of us can't even conceive of a world without cars.' This sentence is very true because we use cars in everyday lives. It also says that our share changed the world in good and bad ways" (Student writing, p. 6). Her writing was formulaic and did not involve her opinion or ideas on the topics. On her conferencing worksheets, she claimed to "needed help with length" and "to make better sentences". Her response on how she felt about her writing was "pretty good".

In her science task and social studies tasks, Grace's writing was different. She did not strictly adhere to the county writing format and wrote with more authority and certainty about the topic. Unlike her other research writing pieces, these tasks showed emerging voice, and Grace was able to write with more confidence. Grace wrote:

> Mayan history was an interesting time period. They had many different cultures and Religions. People said they had a happy but hard-working life. These are the events that happened in the Mayan time period.
> It began in 2000 B.C. and ended in 250 A.D. and ended in 900 A.D. Some of the people were farmers, and the people rebelled against Mayapan. The classic period started in 900 A.D. and ended in 1500 A.D. The colonial period started and ended in 1500 A.D. and hasn't ended.
> The Maya had an easy life and had their every need. The most important food they ate was Maize, which is corn. They spent a lot of their life doing hard work. Sometimes, the ball games they played were part of a religious ceremony, and the losers were sacrificed to the gods. Their clothing depended on their religion. (Student writing sample, p. 90)

Julie.

Julie was the strongest writer in my study. Anecdotal notes recorded that, ironically, she was a reluctant writer and even skipped the Common Core writing, snakes, and her science task writing assignments. Her myth was well organized and descriptive. Julie demonstrated some voice development and did not use the county writing framework. She wrote:

> A long time ago, in a world where it never rained, there was a King, Queen, and Princess.

> The King and Queen were the gods and goddess of their world. King Peta is the Creator. His wife was Queen Aphrodite. The other gods and goddesses of this world were called the Norse gods and goddesses.
> One very sunny day, all the sudden, it just started to rain. Everybody was curious Because it never rained. All the Norse gods tried to stop the rain, but it wouldn't stop. All of the 50,000 villagers decided to join in to help stop the rain. So, everybody decided to join in and help pull the clouds away. (Student writing sample, p. 13)

Julie exhibited emerging voice and a willingness to experiment with dialogue in her free write, Pandora writing, emoji story, and her writing about Australia. When writing about Australia, she wrote:

> People might want to live in Australia because of the beautiful animals and creatures that live there. Like the platypus, kangaroo, and the koala evolved on the island and are unlike any other animals in the world. A bird such as the kookaburra on type of *kingfisher that has a strange call that sounds like a person laughing also lives in Australia
> (Student writing sample, p. 35).

Her free writing about Orange Beach and Fort Walton showed voice development and enthusiasm and she seemed to be invested in her topic. Julie wrote:

> Orange Beach, Alabama is literally the best place to be during the summer in my opinion. The sun is so bright, and the climate is so hot. I went there during Labor Day weekend. I stayed in the most beautiful condo ever. We had the best view of the beach. From where I was, the water was so clear and pretty (Student writing sample, p. 55).

Julie's expository writing was different. In her pieces on cars and microbes her writing became more minimalistic. While Julie still did not adapt the county writing format, her voice was minimal. She wrote the required length and inserted little analysis or personal opinion. Her conference worksheets document that she "didn't know" what she needed help with in conferencing. She also "did not know" how she felt about her writing. In her car writing assignment, Julie wrote, "Some people couldn't imagine a world without cars. Cars deeply shape us. Over time, cars have made our lives easier. It has changed in good and bad ways" (Student writing sample, p. 9).

In writing her social studies task, Julie wrote more than the minimum paper requirements. Her writing showed some voice development, descriptions, and she seemed knowledgeable about her topic. She wrote:

> Christopher Columbus was born in Genoa, Italy in 1451. He grew up wanting to explore the world. Everybody thought that he would grow up to be a weaver like his dad, but Christopher wanted to be an explorer. Later, Christopher set sail to sea learning different Things until his ship was attacked by pirates, but he was able to grab onto something and float to Portugal. He tried to convince the King of Portugal to pay for his voyage, but the King wouldn't agree. It took several meetings before he agreed (Student writing sample, p. 96).

Student Displeasure

The first full week of school, students completed a Student Questionnaire about writing. In answering the question, "When do you write at home?" Dee, Julie, and Leonard wrote that they wrote only when they had homework that required it. Grace said she wrote when she was bored or had nothing else to do. Baylor liked writing comics at home, and Justin liked to write adventure stories.

The students also answered the question, "What do you like to write about?" All the students liked to have a choice in their writing assignment or writing time. Grace liked to write about her family. Leonard liked to write about sports, and Baylor liked writing about factual topics. Grace said, "I don't like to read stories and write about it", the primary type of writing required during writing class. None of the students said they enjoyed writing in the format usually required for class work. All the students except Dee said they would like to do free writes or student choice. Dee said she would like "to not have to write at all."

On the questionnaire, I asked students what they wanted me to know about them as a writer. Dee said simply, "Writing isn't fun. I am bad at it." Julie was even more adamant in

writing, “I will never write unless I have to because I hate writing. If I think a writing is hard, I will get mad and start crying.” Justin pled for free choice. In an attempt at diplomacy, Grace wrote, “Sometimes, the really long writings, I don’t like.” The students expressed a dislike for writing except for Baylor, who only liked writing at home, and Justin, who wrote adventure stories at home. Baylor and Justin preferred writing at home as opposed to writing during the school day (Student questionnaire, p. 1-6).

I wanted to know what the students thought about themselves as writers so the final question asked was “Do you think you are a good writer?” Dee wrote that she did not think so because “It’s hard sometimes.” Baylor thought he was a good writer because he thought writing was easy. Grace, one of the highest students in the fifth grade, said, “I’m not a good writer because I get tired of writing sometimes.” Justin thought he was a good writer. Leonard wrote that he was not a good writer because he struggled with writing ‘good’ sentences. Julie’s answer was perhaps the most telling. She wrote, “I’m not a good writer because when I don’t like to do something, I don’t give it any effort.” Student success on in class writing assignments did not seem to be tied to whether they thought they were good writers. The two students who thought they were good writers enjoyed writing at home (Student questionnaires, p. 6-12).

Reflections from the Field

I wrote many of my teacher journals during student writing time to engage the students by showing my willingness to participate in the classroom assignment. I also thought that students might be motivated if I showed that the assignment was important to me and that I set my other work aside. A few times I was drawn to the avoidance behaviors in which students were engaged during journaling time. At other times, the journals seemed to mirror my frustration at trying to engage students in the writing process.

On September 18, 2017, I wrote, "Some students are weak writers. I am assuming that it's their writing and not just unreasonable prompts and expectations. Even some of my strongest readers are struggling through this." at the beginning of the school year, it is sometimes difficult for teachers to tell if students are struggling through an assignment or resisting the assignment. However, extensive instruction is required to allow students to have some measure of success on the test-based writing format. Lesson plans showed that I coached students through this process when this journal was written. My teacher journal from August 21, 2017 recorded:

> I am supposed to use STAR reading scores to group students into reading and writing groups. I am not seeing a correlation between their reading ability and their writing ability. Leonard and Baylor are two of the strongest writers in class. They complain through every writing assignment (Teacher journal, p. 3).

On September 26, I wrote, "Make sure students can read, write, analyze prompts, inference, identify text structures, and sing Kum-ba-ya at the same time" (Teacher journal, p. 6). In October, I observed students briefly during journal time, and I recorded that, "Baylor is staring at the ceiling. Julie is reading a book in her lap. Dee, are trying to look busy?" (Teacher journal, p. 11). This observation lasted around five minutes. Nothing that I witnessed shocked me as it was typical of what classroom writing time looked like.

My journal notes of October 16th and 20th also included observations about student avoidance behaviors. Typically, students got out of their seats more often than necessary to 'look for something in their cubby' or to get a tissue. It was common during writing time for everyone to need to use the bathroom and to sharpen their pencils. Fifth graders tend to avoid assignments in which they think they cannot be successful. Teacher anecdotal notes and grades showed that writing in the required format proved to be a struggle for many of the students. On

December 5th, I wrote, "I am finally making some headway with students in the 'I hate writing category.' I wish I could do more to build their confidence though" (Teacher anecdotal notes, p. 17).

What Do Students Say?

At the beginning of the semester on September 7, I interviewed students in small groups about how they felt about writing and themselves as writers. I recorded the interviews and then transcribed them. To understand the subtext of what students were expressing, I used Eclectic Coding. My coding included In Vivo codes, descriptive coding, and emotion coding. During first cycle coding, I did line by line coding of the data. During second cycle coding, I winnowed and recategorized some of the codes. I then split the codes from the interviews into three categories: "Writing is hard", Write what you know, and Teacher expectations. Table 4.6 details the categorized codes.

Table 4.6

Writing is Hard	Write What You Know	Perceived Teacher Expectations
"I don't like writing."	"I write about what I want."	Lack of confidence
"I would rather do the hardest	"Let my mind run free."	Developing Confidence
subject in the world."	"More choice"	Clear Expectations
Avoidance	Opportunities to write	Need for Approval
Discomfort		
"It gets tiring."		
Stress		
"I really struggle at it."		
Boredom		

Most students interviewed in early September expressed a negative attitude toward writing in school. I interviewed Grace and Dee together on September 7th. When asked about writing at home, Grace expressed that she only wrote when she was bored. Dee enjoyed playing school at home and said that she did not write at all. Both girls liked to write about their families and things that happened in their lives. Neither of the girls thought she was a good writer. Grace thought that she did not include needed details. Dee simply did not think she was an effective writer. When asked what they thought would make them feel like a better writer, Dee asked that I make it easier. Grace said if she had good grades on writing, she would feel more confident. Ironically Grace was a straight A student and had been throughout her elementary career.

The girls were asked when they felt best about their writing. Grace said she felt best when she was able to "write about what I want." Dee said she would feel better if writing was easier for her. I asked the girls what they wished I knew about writing and learning to write. Grace said that writing for a long time was tiring. Dee informed me that, "Writing isn't fun" (Initial student interviews, p. 5).

On September 7th, I interviewed Baylor and Leonard. I asked them when they wrote outside of school. Leonard said that he did not write at home. Baylor liked writing comics when he was 'bored'. I asked them what they liked to write about. Leonard was on several athletic teams and preferred to write about sports. Baylor liked to write about 'real stuff' such as scientific topics. I asked the boys if they thought they were good writers. Though not a strong writer, Baylor thought writing was 'simple' and fun to do. Leonard said, "It's just hard in general. Because I'm not creative. So, I have trouble deciding what to write." After asking them when they felt the most confident about their writing, Baylor reported, "When I'm outside or sitting at a table, when I can just write a comic strip or a story, it feels pretty easy. When there is

a specific topic, that's hard for me." Leonard felt the most confident when he could write more than the required number of paragraphs. I asked them what would make writing in class easier for them. Baylor repeated that he already found writing easy. Leonard summed up, "Honestly, I just don't like writing. I could get better. I have a lot of spare time, but I just don't like writing and stuff. Writing may be easy for some other people. But for me, it's not" (Initial student interviews, p. 6-8).

Julie and Justin were interviewed together on September 8th and had two different perceptions of writing. Julie voiced that she never wrote at home except for homework. Justin said that he was writing a book at home. Julie did not have a topic she preferred to write about while Justin liked writing about anything 'in his head'. When I asked if they thought they were good writers, Justin responded, "Kind of." Julie said, "I don't think I'm a good writer because no one ever said I was." Julie was the best writer in my class.

I asked them what they thought would make writing easier for them. Julie said she wanted to choose what she wrote. Justin preferred typing to hand writing his papers. I asked them what they wished I knew about how they felt about writing. Justin, who liked writing at home said, "I'd rather do the hardest subject in the world rather than writing, which it is probably writing." Julie confirmed, "I'd rather do anything than write." I asked Justin why he preferred writing at home as opposed to school. He told me, "At home, I get to let my mind run free." One of the strongest narrative writers in my class, Julie expressed, "I don't have an imagination" (Initial student interviews, p. 9-10).

In early December, I interviewed students individually. I asked Baylor how he felt about himself as a writer. His perceptions had not changed over the semester. He still felt confident about his ability. I asked him when he felt the most confident, he responded, "Usually when I'm

writing about stuff that I already know about." I asked him how he felt about his DARE essay that was completed under the supervision of the DARE officer. He thought it was simple because it was all based on things he had already learned about (Final student interviews, p. 11).

Grace was interviewed later that day. I asked her how she felt about herself as a writer. She seemed to have more confidence than in her initial interview and said she still had trouble leaving out important details. When asked if she would change anything about writing in school, she said, "Write about more fun topics, like free writes." I asked Grace if her feelings about how she saw herself as a writer had changed. She said, "Yeah. Because in the first part of the year, I was really having trouble. But when I started writing more, I've gotten better." Grace initially was a little doubtful of her abilities, but her perceptions changed as she had more writing practice in class (Final student interviews, p. 13).

In Leonard's interview, I noticed a new confidence in him. Most of the semester, he was a reluctant writer. He said, "I feel like I've improved my writing, and I am writing more interesting sentences and paragraphs" (Final student interviews, p. 14). Leonard still preferred to write about sports, but he did win the DARE essay contest in our homeroom. I was excited, and mildly surprised; though I knew Leonard was capable, he often turned in the bare minimum on writing assignments. I asked him why he felt he was able to write more on this DARE topic and he said, "DARE was interesting, and I actually paid attention." I asked him what he wanted his future writing teachers to know. He said, "I really enjoy writing, but I like to choose" (Final student interviews, p. 14).

Justin began the semester unsure about himself as a writer. When I asked him how he felt about himself as a writer in his final interview, he said that he felt good about himself. I asked him to tell him about a story he wrote, and he told me that it was unfinished. He

continued, “And the story, it was just coming out of me because I was just really, really into it.” I reminded Justin about the writing assignments in class he had trouble starting and the ones he did not finish. I asked him why he thought writing this story was easier for him, and he said, “Because it was me expressing my feelings onto the keyboard. It was like me expressing myself onto the paper. And the ones I do best are narrative.” I asked him what he would like to change about writing in school. His response was telling: “I would mostly change having to copy things off of writing prompts and having to do certain writing stories” (Final student interviews, p. 15).

Julie was one of the class’ best writers. In the beginning of the semester, she lacked confidence. I asked her, “How do you feel about yourself as a writer?” She responded, “I’m really not that good at it.” Julie voiced that it was a struggle. I asked her how she felt when she had a free write, she said, “I feel better. Because if it’s something I get to pick, I already know about it.” Since Julie was vocal about her dislike on many of the classroom writing assignments, I asked how she felt about the DARE essay. She said she felt better about it because it was “stuff she knew”. She said more free writes would make it easier to write in class (Final student interviews, p. 16).

Dee also continued to lack confidence throughout the semester. She seemed unable to voice why she struggled with writing. I asked about her ‘teaching school’ at home. Dee said that she still taught school. When I asked if she wrote while doing this, she said no. She had pretended students to whom she assigned the writing. She also said that she wanted to be a teacher when she grew up. I asked her about her DARE essay. She said, “It was easy because it was about stuff we already had learned about.” The required length of the DARE essay was the same as other classroom essays. She said she would feel more comfortable as a writer if the topics were something she was already familiar with (Final student interviews, p. 17).

Anecdotal notes, teacher journals, intervention logs, student interviews and questionnaires repeatedly documented student resistance to in class writing prompts and their requests for choice. Testing requirements, intervention requirements, and oversight by administration required me to teach students to write in the same format as standardized testing. While my goals were to create a culture of writers and to encourage creativity, my instruction and my lesson plans did not mirror these goals. The writing instruction I delivered was not what I wanted and as I write this with another school year's instruction looming ahead, I struggle to see how to change this. The power dynamics are clear. I am not in control of the writing instruction in my classroom. The state, county, and administration determine the type of writing instruction my students receive.

Inter-rater Reliability

To ensure reliability with the data analysis, I provided a colleague with a sample of the collected data. The sample consisted of student questionnaires, journals, interview transcription, and writing samples. I provided her with 100% of the student questionnaires, 2 journal samples for each student for a total of 12 samples, 50% of the initial interview transcriptions and of the final interview transcriptions, and 2 writing pieces per student that equated to 12 writing pieces total. I directed my rater to read the data with student voice and writing quality in mind. On the first reading of the data, my rater found evidence of a lack of student voice, student writing avoidance, students writing the bare minimum, and students demonstrating an understanding of the prompt but no emotional investment. The rater also found a difference in the writing about prompts of which the students liked the topics. This was inconsistent from student to student as they embraced different topics. During the first read through of the data, the rater's codes corresponded with mine about 65% of the time.

In a second reading of this data sample, the rater found additional examples of student resistance, checklist, formulaic writing, and additional examples of a lack of voice. Using a consensus approach to establish inter-rater reliability, her second coding corresponded with mine about 75% of the time.

CHAPTER 5. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The research for this study took place during the 2017-2018 school year in my fifth grade English language arts classroom at Southeast Elementary in Lancaster County. Southeast is a Title I elementary school. The school is currently housed in temporary buildings due to a 1,000-year flood during August of 2016 and which destroyed the original campus.

Data sources collected included: observations, interviews, teacher anecdotal notes, a teacher journal, student journals, student writing samples, curricular documents, faculty meeting memos, testing memos and documents, planning notes, teacher lesson plans, intervention lab plans, and intervention anecdotal notes. My research questions were: 1) What is the nature of a writing culture in a fifth-grade writing classroom? and 2) What are students' perceptions of writing in a fifth grade ELA classroom?

Poststructuralism and Foucault

The lens through which I viewed my data was Foucauldian theory. Foucault (1995) questioned society's structures and the underlying thoughts and conceptions in our society. Poststructuralism theory resonates with those attempting to understand power dynamics. In *Crime and Punishment,* Foucault (1980) discussed the school as an instrument of governmental and societal power. This study has looked at the area of the writing curriculum and questioned the ways in which power has influenced its implementation.

Lagemann (2000) revealed the history of teachers being disempowered in the professionalization of their own field. While teachers help to carry out many of the power dynamics of the school system, they are not the authors of this discourse. It is the decision-

makers that are the harbingers of this power dynamic. Many of education's decision makers are far removed from the realities of the school and the classroom.

Question 1

Theme 1. Power and Control in the Writing Culture

Lensmire (2016) reported, "Educators must look critically at what sorts of classroom communities they think are desirable and what sorts of actions they can take to create and sustain those environments" (p. 5). This is based on the assumption that teachers sustain significant control over the environment in their classroom. One of the three themes that emerged during data analysis was Power and Control in the Writing Culture. Evidence of power and control were seen in anecdotal notes from faculty meetings, faculty meeting memos, the county mandated Scope and Sequence, anecdotal notes and handouts documenting constant schedule changes for testing purposes, teacher lesson plans, evidence from faculty data meetings, Intervention lab plans, assessments, testing practice and procedure, and test preparatory handouts, documents, and meetings.

I did not make many of the daily decisions in my classroom. A review of my lesson plan documents showed that I was unable to implement many of my ideas because decisions made at the state, county, and school level overrode my personal goals as an educator. Teacher schedules were made and altered by administration and county level personnel. The number of educational minutes allotted to each core subject is determined at the state level. Funds spent at the schools are determined by the federal government through Title I, II, and III funds.

Lensmire (2016) wrote, "For workshop advocates, voice is a goal, an endpoint, a criterion with which to judge the success of the writing and instruction. Without that stamp of individuality- - without, as Graves (1983) put it, 'the imprint of ourselves on our writing…. the

writing and teaching have failed" (p. 218). This is in direct contrast to the writing tasks required and the way student writing success is measured in Lancaster County

Writing instruction is specified in a rubric written by the State Department of Education. The County Writing Framework, *Hook, Line, and Sinker* (See Appendix B), was mandated by our school's administrations. Our teacher writing resources, *Writing to the Core*, was chosen by administration without teacher feedback.

Teachers and educational leaders are pushed toward the Common Core as a solution for all instructional issues. *Implementing the Common Core State Standards: The Role of the Elementary School Leader* is a document funded by MetLife that encourages teachers to unquestioningly accept this new curriculum. There is a constant pressure on educators to adopt and adapt to whatever new curriculum and terminology their districts adopt.

Foucauldian dynamics could be seen in the writing culture in my fifth grade English language arts classroom during the 2017-2018 school year. The writing culture was one of controlled, test preparatory writing. Writing instructional standards and the county Scope and Sequence were developed from the Common Core Standards by Lancaster County. Even this was overridden by mandates from the state determining the type of writing expected on the end of the year assessment (*LEAP 360*). The stringency of the writing examinations on the standardized test caused several standards from the Scope and Sequence not to be taught to fidelity (In the order, time frame, and to the complexity level required by the county). Power dynamics were evident not only the standardized testing mandates but in the school's handling of test preparation. Students were held to stringent standards. If they failed, they had to attend summer school. Teacher VAM (value added measure) yearly evaluations were tied directly to student writing tests scores on the *LEAP 360*. The stakes were high, and success was expected.

Half of our intervention lab time that should have been used for student reading and writing remediation was consumed by mandatory standardized testing preparation. The remaining time was spent teaching students to succeed at writing test preparatory prompts.

Hall et al. (2016) surveyed and interviewed teachers about their perceptions on the Common Core and found that teacher perceptions varied from supportive to skeptical. Their research suggests that teachers' classroom actions and interactions with students are influenced by their personal theories and beliefs about teaching and learning. Hall et al. (2016) reported that if teachers do not believe in a program or a standard, they are not likely to implement it effectively. This resonated with some of the mandated writing curriculum changes.

Curriculum changes have been associated with attempts to prepare students for standardized testing. It is not difficult to point to the Foucauldian power dynamics in the realm of standardized testing. In public education, there is no escaping this system since it is tied to school funding. At Southeast, standardized testing was mentioned repeatedly and documented in curriculum and faculty handouts. Teacher anecdotal notes documented the reference to grades three through five as "the testing grades".

Foucauldian dynamics can also be seen in the assigning of letter grades to schools (A through F) based solely on standardized test. Teachers are further caught in this web of power by having their VAM score tied to student performance on standardized testing. While teachers are not part of setting curricular requirements in standardized testing, this instrument measures them, although they have no power in its design.

All fifth-grade students attending public schools in Lancaster County took the *LEAP 360* test near the end of the 2017-2018 school year. Curriculum documents showed that the expectations for fifth-grade writing on these examinations were similar. Students completed one

of three types of writing: literary analysis, research, or narrative. These tasks were complex. Students must master a variety of skills to achieve success: writing in complete sentences, writing in complete paragraphs, reading grade level appropriate text, reading a variety of genres, annotating writing, using correct grammar and syntax, brainstorming, and understanding how to read a writing task. The county Scope and Sequence and testing documents indicated that mastery of all these skills should occur before fifth grade; frequently this is not the case. Both the school and the county indicated that writing was a weakness for students entering the fifth grade for the 2017/2018 school year.

Faculty meeting handouts and teacher anecdotal notes showed that Lancaster County adopted a "push-in" model for interventions, designed to bring students up to grade level in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. The purpose of intervention lab was to help students improve and raise their levels in reading and mathematics fluency to grade level. Weekly intervention plans showed that portions of intervention lab time were taken for testing practice and test preparation. My writing intervention lesson plans showed that written expression intervention consisted of practicing writing introduction and body paragraphs, annotating passages connected to writing prompts, and practice analyzing writing prompts. These lessons were tied to test preparatory writing. Of the twenty weeks set out for writing interventions, nine of them were taken for mandatory testing and *LEAP 360* practice testing.

Faculty meetings typically consist of a variety of topics: positive behavior incentives, school activities, motivating staff. At Southeast, a number of faculty meetings focused on standardized testing and analyzing data to prepare for standardized testing. Instruction was planned around areas that were determined weak during the previous year's standardized testing.

My anecdotal notes showed that writing was considered a weakness at Southeast across the school.

Teacher lesson plans documented that classroom instructional time incorporated lessons on grammar, note taking, the writing process (brainstorming, rough drafts, editing, revising, and final drafts), and writing skills. While I intended to have daily student journaling, the stringency of the writing prompt took away time from this instructional activity.

My goals as an educator included fostering a writing culture where students enjoyed their writing and thought that their writing was valued. Unfortunately, the power dynamics in my school, the focus on standardized testing, and the schedule changes and restraints prohibited many of my goals from becoming reality.

Theme 2. Dissonance in the Writing Curriculum

The second theme apparent in my data was dissonance within the writing curriculum. Evidence of this theme was found in the county's Scope and Sequence, lab intervention plans, handouts, and anecdotal notes, lesson plans, and the county writing framework. McCarthey, Woodard, and Kang (2013) examined the relationships between teacher beliefs about writing and their instruction. They found dissonance between teacher's espoused beliefs and their writing and instructional practices. Teacher lesson plans and anecdotal notes showed that this was a factor in my classroom.

Vygotsky (1962) believed that instruction should be based on experiences that students have shared. This differs from the scripted, highly analytical writing required as part of the mandated writing curriculum. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) asserted that novice writers are knowledge tellers. Expert writers are "knowledge transformers". Students are unable to write

about topics about which they are knowledgeable and thus they limited to the role of knowledge tellers.

My students received their small group instruction during intervention time, an important instructional time as it was one of the times I pulled students into small groups. Of the twenty weeks on the intervention schedule, nine were taken up by mandatory testing (see Table 4.5). Data analysis showed that the remaining allocated writing time was spent teaching students to read and interpret writing prompts, to analyze their own writing, to edit their writing, to find main ideas and supporting details, and to participate in group and individual writing conferences. Mandated state testing pushed some of this small group instruction back into the classroom instructional time.

Instructional time is critical to give students a chance to become fluent in these areas. Young-Suk, Al Otaiba, Folsom, Greenwhich, and Puranin (2014) pointed to the relationship between reading and writing. Upon researching six traits of writing, they asserted that more classroom time must be given for students to become fluent readers and writers instead of focusing on an overwhelming number of standards. Again, fluency takes a back seat to students meeting test-taking requirements. The complexity of the writing tasks required students to have mastered a variety of skills to ensure success. Intervention logs showed that students needed extensive guidance to analyze the writing prompts and to determine what was required of them. Anecdotal notes and intervention plans showed that instruction in writing prompt analysis, note-taking, and writing introductions was a painstaking and length process. Interruptions in the schedule and time taken away from intervention minutes for mandated testing prevented students from making progress.

Ottier and Mahony (2018) researched the efficacy of performance feedback for student writers. The researchers found that performance feedback did not have a strong correlation with student success. They found, however, that student task effort greatly impacted their perceptions of their writing. Their research showed that student task effort was more important than mastery experiences or feedback in student perceptions of writing. This points to the importance of student motivation and ownership in determining their success as writers and their confidence in their ability as writers. In my classroom, performance feedback did not increase the students' confidence as writers. The dissonance within the curriculum and the students' lack of connection with the writing tasks seemed to limit the effectiveness of feedback.

One of the main goals of the county Scope and Sequence was having students write about a variety of topics and in a variety of formats. Lesson plan documents showed that students primarily completed research-based writing and narratives based on writing prompts and their accompanying writing tasks. Routman (1996) reported that the components of an effective literacy program include a strong literature base, a strong writing program, explicit skill bases (i.e. phonemic awareness), on-going diagnostics, and power intervention. By these standards, our writing program was not strong. It was no longer standards based and instead was based on prepping students for a test. Powerful interventions were being written, but mandated testing preparation took away time from these interventions.

So, there was dissonance within the writing curriculum. Research emphasizes allowing students time to master basic literacy skills, to write about personal experiences, to transform knowledge, and to follow the writing process. The power dynamics in the writing curriculum, hijacked by standardized testing and mandates, did not allow students the space to do this. Instead, the dissonance within the curriculum trickled down into classroom writing instruction

and culture, sending students mixed messages about what writing was and what their writing should look like within the classroom.

Question 2

Student writing samples and anecdotal notes showed that students frequently resisted writing assignments. The brevity of their writing, frequent trips to the pencil sharpener, requests to use the bathroom, and direct complaints were evidence of their resistance. Using the county writing framework did little to motivate students. Frequently, they attempted to use it for narratives for which the framework was not designed. In research writing and literary analysis, students used the framework as an excuse for their minimalistic writing. Garlid (2014) documented the avoidance behavior of his students including using the restroom, sharpening pencils, talking, daydreaming, doodling, and even faking illness. He recounted, "The pressures on students and teachers to meet deadlines, reach achievement goals, and address standards encouraged more compliance and creativity" (p. 58). Student compliance was required for success in test preparatory writing assignments. Their perceptions of the writing tasks as separate from themselves were not surprising. Writing was a task they completed. It was not personal and had nothing to do with their individual or collective voices.

Wood and Dickinson (2000) studied middle grades literacy classrooms and found that teacher roles consistent with promoting literacy were being a reflective practitioner, being a collaborator, a monitor, and actively mentoring students. Research showed that the school needed a school wide commitment to literacy and teachers needed a shared definition of what it means to be literate. Teachers are frequently encouraged to stop being reflective practitioners and to accept new curriculum reforms. Yearly curricular changes also make it difficult for all teachers to have the same definition of what it means to be literate. Students are confused as they

receive different messages between grade levels on what success in the literacy classroom looks like.

Rietdijk, Van Weijen, Bergh, and Jannsen (2018) researched the relationships between the way classroom practice, time, and teacher beliefs impacted student instruction. They studied the approaches of communicative writing, process writing, and writing strategy instruction and found that there was a relationship between classroom writing practices, learning time, and a teacher's beliefs about writing. Classroom writing time and time to participate in all of the stages of the writing process were found to be important factors in student's motivation to write. The researchers also found that communicative feedback and teacher training enhanced both teacher and student efficacy. Teacher efficacy and beliefs are important components in student writing success. My students had ample classroom writing time; in spite of this and my training in writing instruction, they did not become autonomous as writers.

Ciullo and Mason (2017) did their research with middle grade students with learning disabilities. The researchers found that students needed to learn self-regulation in writing. Self-regulation was defined as the ability to think critically about and take ownership of their own writing. Ciullo and Mason (2017) found that this was essential for students to be able to write across multiple genres. The researchers emphasized the importance of using evidence-based writing instruction and the writing process to help students develop this ability. My students did not become self-regulated writers and required constant assistance in their development of prompts; this might have been linked to their lack of motivation.

Blanch et al. (2017) stated that "Teachers are prone to assign writing rather than teach it…yet today's students need modeling and guided practice if they are to grow as writers" (p. 49). Their research in fifth grade classrooms showed that students had knowledge of the writing

process but did not know how to use it effectively. The researchers pointed to the writing process as a gateway to lead students to authentic writing. While the writing process was used extensively in my classroom, students did not internalize its use without guidance.

Eren (2009) examined teacher efficacy among students training to be teacher and student teachers. The researcher found a link between student motivation and behavior. Eren (2009) found that a teacher's beliefs impacted his or her efficacy. While confident in my ability to write and the goals I have for my students, my beliefs and goals provided a dissonance between these beliefs and the type of writing instruction students received in my classroom. Teacher lesson plans documented that most writing instructional time was allotted to teaching students to annotate and to analyze writing prompts.

Pressely et al. (2007) conducted multiple research studies and spent hours observing English language arts classroom. The researchers found that effective literacy teachers employed up to fifty motivating practices a day. They found that effective literacy teachers had a thorough understanding of what students had learned the year before. Pressely et al. (2007) reported that an effective English language arts classroom: has trained teachers, uses the plan, draft, revise model, gives many times for students to practice, demands that students improve, utilizes writing across the curriculum, has teacher instruction, and has a sense of enthusiasm for writing. While teacher lesson plans documented multiple times for students to practice and while I demanded student improvement, student resistance and a lack of enthusiasm for the topics and assignments impeded the development of writing culture and created a dissonance in the classroom environment I sought to create.

Research shows that the multifaceted nature of writing requires that writing instruction includes sustained writing time, student-teacher conferences, peer conferences among students,

student choice, time for student writing daily, and writing workshops. Students need to develop the intrinsic motivation to write, which is developed through viewing writing as a creative process, viewing literacy as a creative process, viewing literacy as a social practice, self-directed working time, student choice, giving some control back to the learner and open ended assignments (Gambrell, Dromsky, & Mazzoni, 2000; Grainger, Goouch, & Lambrith, 2005; Liner & Butler, 2000; Routman, 1996; Wood & Dickinson, 2000; Wood & Nichols, 2000).

Theme 3. Student Resistance in Writing

The third theme I identified through my data analysis was student resistance in writing. This theme surfaced in the analysis of student writing, teacher anecdotal notes, anecdotal notes in interventions, missing student assignments, writing conference notes, teacher lesson plans, and the lack of progress and ownership exhibited in student writing.

Student questionnaire.

The first full week of school, students filled out a Student Questionnaire about writing. Students answered the question, "When do you write at home?" Only Baylor and Justin said that they wrote at home for a purpose other than homework. The students also answered the question, "What do you like to write about?" All the students liked to have a choice in their writing assignment or writing time. Grace said, "I don't like to read stories and write about it." This was the primary type of writing required during writing class. None of the students said they enjoyed writing in the format usually required for class work (Student questionnaires, p. 2-4).

On the questionnaire, I asked students what they wanted me to know about them as a writer. Dee said simply, "Writing isn't fun." Julie was even more adamant writing, "I will never write unless I have to because I hate writing." Justin made another plea for free choice. Grace

wrote, “Sometimes, the really long writings, I don’t like.” Except for Baylor, who only liked writing at home, and Justin, who wrote adventure stories at home, the students expressed a dislike for writing. Baylor and Justin still preferred writing at home, as opposed to writing during the school day (Student questionnaire, p. 5-6).

I wanted to know what the students thought about themselves as writers. So, the final question was, “Do you think you are a good writer?” Baylor and Justin were the only students who enjoyed writing at home and thought they were good writers (Student questionnaire, p. 6).

Gambrell et al. (2000) found that motivation is key in all student success. Students who are motivated read more and students with more reading experiences have a better chance of overall reading success. For students to be motivated, they need to initiate and sustain goal directed action. The style of writing required by prompts was so stringent that student resistance was high and progress was slow. Gambrell et al. (2000) found that students were motivated by choice. Choice is an important component in student empowerment. Strong motivation is required for students to develop a positive writing culture. The researchers also found that adolescent students reference their peers and collaboration becomes more important. Collaboration with peers was limited due to the time required to instruct students in the processes required to successfully write.

Gambrell et al. (2000) also found that classrooms that were successful in motivating students to write helped them to develop intrinsic motivation, allowed them to seek answers to questions, to communicate ideas, and to grow as listeners, writers, and learners. Student resistance showed that this was not the case in the writing culture in my classroom. Lack of intrinsic motivation can be linked to students’ lack of connection to the writing prompt.

Liner and Butler (2000) emphasized the importance of student choice in literacy. They urged the use of student writing workshops, student choice, ample writing time, and student responsibility. In their research with struggling middle grade students, Wood and Nichols (2000) found that writing daily was instrumental to helping students. The researchers emphasize daily time to practice these skills.

While evidence showed that my classroom had sustained writing time, student-teacher conferences, time for writing daily, and writing workshops, students were not given choice because of the nature of the writing curriculum and culture. They did not develop the intrinsic motivation to write in class. In student interviews, they frequently requested student choice. Table 4.6 shows a breakdown of student statements and emotions on writing and repeatedly requesting student choice. Students exhibited a lack of confidence in the area of writing as well.

Student interviews.

When I interviewed students in early September, most of them expressed a negative attitude toward writing in school. Grace and Dee were interviewed together on September 7th. When asked about writing at home, Grace expressed that she only wrote when she was bored and Dee, who enjoyed playing school at home, said that she did not write at all. The girls wanted to write about their lives. Neither of the girls thought she was a good writer. When asked what they thought would make them feel like a better writer, Dee asked that I make it easier. Grace said if she had good grades on writing, she would feel more confident. Grace was and always had been a straight a student. When they asked when felt best about their writing, their responses connected to the research of Liner and Butler (2000) and Woods and Nicholas on student choice being an important motivator (Initial interviews, p. 4-5).

On September 7th, I also interviewed Baylor and Leonard. I asked them when they wrote outside of school. Leonard was on several athletic teams and preferred to write about sports. Baylor liked to write about "real stuff," such as scientific topics. I asked the boys if they thought they were good writers. Baylor, though not a strong writer, thought writing was "simple" and fun to do. Leonard said, "It's just hard in general. Because I'm not creative. So, I have trouble deciding what to write." In asking them when they felt the most confident about their writing, Baylor reported, "When I'm outside or sitting at a table, when I can just write a comic strip or a story, it feels pretty easy. When there is a specific topic, that's hard for me." I asked them what would make writing in class easier for them. Baylor repeated that he already found writing easy. Leonard summed up, "Honestly, I just don't like writing. I could get better. I have a lot of spare time, but I just don't like writing and stuff. Writing may be easy for some other people. But for me, it's not" (Initial interviews, p. 5-6).

Julie and Justin were interviewed together on September 8th. The two had very different perceptions of writing. Julie voiced that she never wrote at home except for homework and Justin said that he was writing a book at home. Julie did not have a preferred writing topic and Justin liked writing about anything "in his head". When I asked if they thought they were good writers, Justin responded, "Kind of." Julie said, "I don't think I'm a good writer because no one ever said I was." Julie was the best writer in my class.

I asked them what they thought would make writing easier for them. Julie said she wanted to choose what she wrote. I asked them what they wished I knew about how they felt about writing. Justin, who liked writing at home said, "I'd rather do the hardest subject in the world rather than writing, which it is probably writing." Julie confirmed, "I'd rather do anything than write." I asked Justin why he preferred writing at home as opposed to school. He told me,

"At home, I get to let my mind run free." Julie expressed, "I don't have an imagination." She was one of the strongest narrative writers in my class (Initial interviews, p. 9-10).

Garlid's (2014) research was with reluctant male writers. His targeted intervention of an after-school writing program focused on allowing student choice, providing timely feedback, and allowing students to share their work. This was instrumental in changing the students' perceptions of writing. In student interviews and questionnaires, students repeatedly requested the option of student choice. They wanted to write in areas about which they were knowledgeable. My lack of control over setting my own curriculum hindered allowing my students to write about their known topics and areas.

Kissell and Miller (2015) used writer's workshop as an empowerment tool for students and teachers. Their research encouraged conferencing and providing students to share their work. Student choice was important for the teacher who was observed as it allowed writing to become an agent of democracy in her classroom. My students' resistance and verbal responses to their writing curriculum showed that they did not feel empowered by their writing.

Lensmire (2016) warned that, "Encouragement is sometimes not far from coercion in the classroom, given unequal power relations among teachers and students" (p. 17). The students' voices may have felt silent in the wake of stringent writing requirements and editing.

Student factors impacting writing efficacy include student literacy, student reading level, students' opportunities to write at home and school, and student attitudes toward writing (Brown, Morrell, & Rowlands, 2011; Burke, 2014; Hamilton, 2011; Kent, Wanzek, Petscher, Otaiba, & Kim, 2014; VanHartingsveld, 2013). Reading level, literate environments, increased time for writing, and a positive attitude toward writing also positively impact student writing. While all

the students in my study read successfully on grade level, increased writing time and student attitudes toward writing were not positive factors in this study.

Bright (2016) found in his research in intermediate classrooms that the generally accepted purposes for school writing included transactional writing (inform/persuade), expressive writing (relates to personal experience), and poetic writing (creative and imaginative form). Our writing curriculum had deviated from the traditionally accepted writing curriculum in traditional schooling, however, Bright's (2016) findings on student perceptions of writing held true in my classroom. He found that students did not always perceive the same values and traits of writing that the teacher wished to communicate. He found that many of the traits teachers communicated became their definition of what made a good writer. Perhaps this explains why the students' perceptions of themselves did not improve in spite of extensive practice. Students overall perceived classroom writing as a chore, or as something to which they had difficulty relating. Only in writing their own stories, their DARE essays, and their science and social studies tasks did they take ownership and step into the role of "Knowledge Transformers".

Implications For Teachers

As an educator, this case study illuminated many areas of my classroom writing instruction that bear further examination. While in previous years I had questioned student attitudes and writing reluctance, I was unable to pinpoint the areas that caused these classroom issues. As an educator, it is important to understand the dissonance between your education philosophy and the required curriculum of your district. While simply realizing the differences in philosophy and required practice is insufficient to alleviate all of the classroom situations that may emerge from this, being aware as an educator is vital.

Teachers of writing need a strong understanding of what motivates students as writers and the importance of student motivation and its connection to student choice and student efficacy. Many factors limit my instructional freedom in my classroom and I was not fully aware of the extent of interference until this study. In my future classroom instruction, I will be more aware of my students' needs for choice, opportunities to collaborate, and chances to engage in a variety of writing.

In the current educational climate of standardized testing leading instructional decisions, teachers must be aware of the mandates and curriculum changes in their classrooms and their potential impact on students. Sudden changes can impact teacher efficacy by varying instructional areas and, in turn, impacting the quality of student instruction and student cultures.

Implications For Researchers

In the current educational climate, more research is needed on teacher efficacy in the light of increased standardized testing requirements. We need to understand how the push-in from district and state entities impacts everyday classroom instruction and need to ask what instructional practices are sacrificed in favor of test preparation.

In addition to teacher impact, students are affected by the push-down of new mandates and curriculum changes. Additional research is needed in both quantitative and qualitative areas to see a fuller picture of how students are impacted and how much instructional time is directed solely for test preparation. Research is also needed on the ways that the constant curriculum shifts impact student motivation and efficacy. Finally, classroom teachers need further research that identifies what changes should be made to help educators adapt and to help students cope in an ever-shifting educational climate.

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APPENDIX A. QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

What grade are you in?

Do you enjoy writing? Why/Why not?

If no, what do you think would make writing more enjoyable?

If you could write about anything, what would it be?

Define writing in your own words.

What does it take to be a good writer?

Who is your favorite writer (author)? Why?

Who do you think is a good writer (in the class)? Why do you see them as a good writer?

What do you wish your teacher knew about the way you learn?

APPENDIX B. WRITING FRAMEWORK

Introductory Paragraph

Bait the Hook!	Hook the reader's attention to the subject (General statement about the subject. Can be a fact, definition of the subject or question. For example, ask yourself what could be a broad statement about the topic, Eagles?) Eagles are one type of bird.
Bait the Hook!	Hook the reader's attention to the subject (General statement about the subject. Can be a fact, definition of the subject or question. For example, ask yourself what could be a broad statement about the topic, Eagles?) They can be found in places that are high.
Set the Hook!	Narrow the topic focus (Topic sentence should be specific statement about what the focus (answer) of the paragraph will be.) Eagles are interesting because the female takes care of her young, the male gathers the food, and they live in large nests.
Start the Boat!	Transition (Moving to the body paragraph) (Students will mention the topic of their next paragraph.) Eagles are interesting to watch.

(table cont'd.)

Body Paragraph

Set the Hook!	Narrow the topic focus (Topic sentence should be specific statement about what the focus of the paragraph will be.) When watching eagles, the female and male eagle have very different roles.
Feed With Worms!	Who, What, When, Where, Why (Details, Evidence, Reasons) (Describe who, what, when, where or why about the subject to give details to strengthen writing. Allow students to expand for differentiation.) The female eagle lays eggs in her large nest and covers them with her body to keep them warm and safe.
Feed With Worms!	Who, What, When, Where, Why (Details, Evidence, Reasons) (Describe who, what, when, where or why about the subject to give details to strengthen writing. Allow students to expand for differentiation.) The daddy eagle will spend his time collecting food, such as worms, and bring the food to the momma eagle and her babies in the nest.
Feed With Worms!	Who, What, When, Where, Why (Details, Evidence, Reasons) (Describe who, what, when, where or why about the subject to give details to strengthen writing. Allow students to expand for differentiation.) The nest is a safe place for all eggs to hatch and baby eagles to make their home.

(table cont'd.)

Start the Boat!	Transition (Moving to the body paragraph) (Students will mention the topic of their next paragraph.) Eagles are interesting to watch.

Body Paragraph

Set the Hook!	Narrow the topic focus (Topic sentence should be specific statement about what the focus of the paragraph will be.)
Feed With Worms!	Who, What, When, Where, Why (Details, Evidence, Reasons) (Describe who, what, when, where or why about the subject to give details to strengthen writing. Allow students to expand for differentiation.)
Feed With Worms!	Who, What, When, Where, Why (Details, Evidence, Reasons) (Describe who, what, when, where or why about the subject to give details to strengthen writing. Allow students to expand for differentiation.)

(table cont'd.)

Feed With Worms!	Who, What, When, Where, Why (Details, Evidence, Reasons) (Describe who, what, when, where or why about the subject to give details to strengthen writing. Allow students to expand for differentiation.)
Start the Boat!	Transition (Moving to the body paragraph) (Students will mention the topic of their next paragraph.)

Body Paragraph

Set the Hook!	Narrow the topic focus (Topic sentence should be specific statement about what the focus of the paragraph will be.)
Feed With Worms!	Who, What, When, Where, Why (Details, Evidence, Reasons) (Describe who, what, when, where or why about the subject to give details to strengthen writing. Allow students to expand for differentiation.)
Feed With Worms!	Who, What, When, Where, Why (Details, Evidence, Reasons) (Describe who, what, when, where or why about the subject to give details to strengthen writing. Allow students to expand for differentiation.)

(table cont'd.)

Feed With Worms!	Who, What, When, Where, Why (Details, Evidence, Reasons) (Describe who, what, when, where or why about the subject to give details to strengthen writing. Allow students to expand for differentiation.)

Conclusion

Reel It In!	Reword, answer or restate the hook (State the general statement in a different way by giving closure to the writing piece.) One type of interesting bird is an Eagle.
Reel It In!	Summary statement of details or reasons Eagle parents take excellent care of their young.
Catch It!	Conclude with an opinion about the subject (Opinion statement about the subject to give a sense of closure.) Eagles are fascinating to watch.

APPENDIX C. STATE WRITING RUBRIC

DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION
louisiana believes

LEAP 2025

Grades 4–5 Literary Analysis Task (LAT) and Research Simulation Task (RST) Scoring Rubric

Construct Measured	Score Point 4	Score Point 3	Score Point 2	Score Point 1	Score Point 0
Reading Comprehension and Written Expression	The student response • demonstrates **full comprehension** of ideas stated explicitly and/or inferentially by providing an **accurate** analysis; • addresses the prompt and provides **effective** development of the topic that is **consistently appropriate** to the task, purpose, and audience; • uses **clear** reasoning supported by **relevant** text-based evidence in the development of the topic; • is **effectively** organized with **clear and coherent** writing; • uses language **effectively** to clarify ideas.	The student response • demonstrates **comprehension** of ideas stated explicitly and/or inferentially by providing a **mostly accurate** analysis; • addresses the prompt and provides **mostly effective** development of the topic that is **appropriate** to the task, purpose, and audience; • uses **mostly clear** reasoning supported by **relevant** text-based evidence in the development of the topic; • is organized with **mostly clear and coherent** writing; • uses language that is **mostly effective** to clarify ideas.	The student response • demonstrates **basic comprehension** of ideas stated explicitly and/or inferentially by providing a **generally accurate** analysis; • addresses the prompt and provides **some** development of the topic that is **somewhat appropriate** to the task, purpose, and audience; • uses **some** reasoning and text-based evidence in the development of the topic; • demonstrates **some** organization with **somewhat coherent** writing; • uses language to express ideas with **some** clarity.	The student response • demonstrates **limited comprehension** of ideas by providing a **minimally accurate** analysis; • addresses the prompt and provides **minimal** development of the topic that is **limited in its appropriateness** to the task, purpose, and audience; • uses **limited** reasoning and text-based evidence; • demonstrates **limited** organization and coherence; • uses language to express ideas with **limited** clarity.	The student response • demonstrates **no comprehension** of ideas by providing an **inaccurate or no** analysis; • is **undeveloped and/or inappropriate** to the task, purpose, and audience; • includes **little to no** text-based evidence; • **lacks** organization and coherence; • **does not** use language to express ideas with clarity.
Knowledge of Language and Conventions		The student response demonstrates **full command** of the conventions of standard English at an appropriate level of complexity. There **may** be a **few minor errors** in mechanics, grammar, and usage, but **meaning is clear**.	The student response demonstrates **some command** of the conventions of standard English at an appropriate level of complexity. There **may** be errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage that **occasionally impede understanding**, but the **meaning is generally clear**.	The student response demonstrates **limited command** of the conventions of standard English at an appropriate level of complexity. There **may** be errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage that **often impede understanding.**	The student response **does not demonstrate command** of the conventions of standard English at the appropriate level of complexity. **Frequent and varied errors** in mechanics, grammar, and usage **impede understanding**.

Grades 4–5 Narrative Writing Task (NWT) Scoring Rubric

Construct Measured	Score Point 3	Score Point 2	Score Point 1	Score Point 0
Written Expression	The student response • is **effectively** developed with narrative elements and is **consistently appropriate** to the task; • is **effectively** organized with **clear and coherent** writing; • uses language **effectively** to clarify ideas.	The student response • is developed with **some** narrative elements and is **generally appropriate** to the task; • is organized with **mostly coherent** writing; • uses language that is **mostly effective** to clarify ideas.	The student response • is **minimally** developed with **few** narrative elements and is **limited in its appropriateness** to the task; • demonstrates **limited** organization and coherence; • uses language to express ideas with **limited** clarity.	The student response • is **undeveloped and/or inappropriate** to the task; • **lacks** organization and coherence; • **does not** use language to express ideas with clarity.
Knowledge of Language and Conventions	**The student response demonstrates full command of the conventions of standard English at an appropriate level of complexity. There may be a few minor errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage, but meaning is clear.**	The student response demonstrates **some command** of the conventions of standard English at an appropriate level of complexity. There may be errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage that **occasionally impede understanding,** but the **meaning is generally clear.**	The student response demonstrates **limited command** of the conventions of standard English at an appropriate level of complexity. There may be errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage that **often impede understanding.**	The student response **does not demonstrate command** of the conventions of standard English at the appropriate level of complexity. **Frequent and varied errors** in mechanics, grammar, and usage **impede understanding.**

NOTES:

- The reading dimension is **not** scored for **elicited** narrative stories.
- **Per the** Louisiana Student Standards, **narrative elements** in grades 3-5 may include establishing a situation; organizing a logical event sequence; describing scenes, objects, or people; **developing characters' personalities; and using dialogue** as appropriate.
- **The elements of organization to be assessed are ex**pressed in the grade-level standards W1-W3.

APPENDIX D. PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Consent Form for a Non-Clinical Study

1. Study Title: Foucauldian Dynamics in the Formation of Writing Culture

2. Performance Site: Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

3. Investigators: The following investigators are available for questions about this study,

M-F, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30p.m.

Dr. Kim Skinner, 225-578-6709

Ms. Ashley Naul, 225-665-5500

4. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research project is to determine what factors influence the development of writing culture in a fifth grade English language arts classroom.

5. Participant Inclusion: 5th grade students

6. Number of subjects: 25

7. Study Procedures: The study will be conducted during the fall semester: August 2017 to December 2017. Students will participate in normal classroom activities: writing assignments, pretests, posttests, writing conferencing, classroom observations, and student questionnaires.

8. Benefits: Students will gain a voice in the educational process.

9. Risks: There is no known risk. Students will be participating in normal classroom activities.

10. Right to Refuse: Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time

without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

11. Privacy: Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be

included in the publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is

required by law.

12. Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landin, Institutional Review Board,(225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Subject Name:_____ Date:_____

Subject Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent Name: _____ Date: _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX E. CHILD ASSENT FORM

Child Assent Form

I,_____, agree to be in a study to find ways that writing curriculum is influenced by teacher expectations and student expectations. I will do writing assignments and activities. I may be interviewed (asked questions about writing) or observed during regular class time. I can decide to stop being in the study at any time without getting in trouble.

Child's Signature:_____ Age:_____ Date:_____

Witness* _____ Date:_____

APPENDIX F. SECURITY OF DATA

**Please sign and submit this document with your IRB application* *

Security of Data Number: PS06.20

SECURITY OF DATA

PURPOSE

I certify that I have read and will follow LSU's policy on security of data - PS06.20 (http://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/policiesprocedures/policies-procedures/6-20/) and will follow best practices for security of confidential data (http://www.lsu.edu/it_services/its_security/best-practices/sensitive-data.php) This Policy Statement outlines the responsibilities of all users in supporting and upholding the security of data at Louisiana State University regardless of user's affiliation or relation with the University, and irrespective of where the data is located, utilized, or accessed. All members of the University community have a responsibility to protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data from unauthorized generation, access, modification, disclosure, transmission, or destruction. Specifically, this Policy Statement establishes important guidelines and restrictions regarding any and all use of data at, for, or through Louisiana State University. This policy is not exhaustive of all user responsibilities, but is intended to outline certain specific responsibilities that each user acknowledges, accepts, and agrees to follow when using data provided at, for, by and/or through the University. Violations of this policy may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal, expulsion, and/or legal action. It is recommended that all personnel on your project be familiar with these policies and requirements for security of your data.

In addition it is recommended that PIs review any grant, nondisclosure/confidentiality agreement, or restricted data agreements before publishing articles using the data.

I certify that I have read and understand these policies

Name: Ashley W. Naul

Date: 7/24/17

APPENDIX G. IRB

Application for Approval of Projects Which Use Human Subjects

This application is used for projects/studies that cannot be reviewed through the exemption process.

– Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include parts B-F, listed below. Once the application is completed, please submit to the IRB Office by e-mail (irb@lsu.edu) for review and please allow ample time for the application to be reviewed. Expedited reviews usually take one month. Carefully completed applications should be submitted three weeks before a meeting to ensure a prompt decision.

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

– A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:
- **(A)** This completed form
- **(B)** A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)
- **(C)** Copies of all instruments to be used.
  *If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.
- **(D)** The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)
- **(E)** Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php)
- **(F)** Signed copy of the IRB Security of Data Agreement: (https://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/ored/files/2013/07/IRB-Security-of-Data.pdf)

1) Principal Investigator*: Dr. Kim Skinner **Rank:** Assistant Prof.
*PI must be an LSU Faculty Member

Dept: Education - Curriculum and Ins. **Ph:** 225-578-6709 **E-mail:** KSkinner@lsu.edu

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each
- Ashley Naul, Doctoral Student, (225) 572-1073, Ashley.Naul@LPSB.org

3) Project Title: Foucauldian Dynamics in the Formation of a Writing Culture

4) Proposed Start Date: August 2017 **5) Proposed Duration Months:** December 2017

6) Number of Subjects Requested: 25 **7) LSU Proposal #:**

8) Funding Sought From: n/a

ASSURANCE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR named above
I accept personal responsibility for the conduct of this study (including ensuring compliance of co-investigators/co-workers) in accordance with the documents submitted herewith and the following guidelines for human subject protection: The Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance (FWA00003892) with OHRP and 45 CFR 46 (available from http://www.lsu.edu/irb). I also understand that copies of all consent forms **must be maintained at LSU for three years after the completion of the project.** If I leave LSU before that time, the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Signature of PI Kim Skinner Date 7/18/17

ASSURANCE OF STUDENT/PROJECT COORDINATOR named above. If multiple Co-Investigators, please create a "signature page" for all Co-Investigators to sign. Attach the "signature page" to the application.

I agree to adhere to the terms of this document and am familiar with the documents referenced above.

Signature of Co-PI (s) Ashley Naul Date 7/18/17

Continue on the next page

-

Part 1: A. Is a HIPAA Agreement Needed?

Are you obtaining any health information from a health care provider that contains any of the identifiers listed below?

A. Names
B. Address: street address, city, county, precinct, ZIP code, and their equivalent geocodes. Exception for Zip codes: the initial three digits of the ZIP Code may be used, if according to current publicly available data from the Bureau of the Census: (1) The geographic unit formed by combining all ZIP codes with the same three initial digits contains more than 20,000 people; and (2) the initial three digits of a ZIP code for all such geographic units containing 20,000 or fewer people is changed to '000'. (Note: The 17 currently restricted 3-digit ZIP codes to be replaced with '000' include: 036, 059, 063, 102, 203, 556, 692, 790, 921, 830, 831, 878, 879, 884, 890, and 893.)
C. Dates related to individuals
   i. Birth date
   ii. Admission date
   iii. Discharge date
   iv. Date of death
   v. And all ages over 89 and all elements of dates (including year) indicative of such ago. Such ages and elements may be aggregated into a single category of age 90 or older.
D. Telephone numbers;
E. Fax numbers;
F. Electronic mail addresses;
G. Social security numbers;
H. Medical record numbers; (including prescription numbers and clinical trial numbers)
I. Health plan beneficiary numbers;
J. Account numbers;
K. Certificate/license numbers;
L. Vehicle identifiers and serial numbers including license plate numbers;
M. Device identifiers and serial numbers;
N. Web Universal Resource Locators (URLs);
O. Internet Protocol (IP) address numbers;
P. Biometric identifiers, including finger and voice prints;
Q. Full face photographic images and any comparable images; and
R. Any other unique identifying number, characteristic, or code; except a code used alone or in combination with other information to identify an individual who is the subject of the information.

○ **YES** Your study falls under the HIPAA (Health Information Privacy and Accountability Act) and you must obtain either a limited data set use agreement or a HIPAA authorization agreement from the health care provider. This agreement must be submitted with your IRB protocol.

Ø **NO** You do not need a HIPAA agreement.

B. Are pregnant women specifically excluded from participation on the consent form?

Ø **YES** Skip to Part C.

○ **NO** You need to document the following:

☐ 1. Is the purpose of the activity to meet the health needs of the mother and -
   ☐ a. Fetus will be placed at risk only to minimum to meet mothers needs.
   ☐ b. Fetus risk is minimal.

☐ 2. Have mother and father given informed consent including potential affects on the fetus?

☐ 3. Father's consent to be omitted when:
   ☐ a. Purpose of activity is to meet health needs of the mother
   ☐ b. His identity can not be ascertained
   ☐ c. He is not reasonably available
   ☐ d. Pregnancy is from rape

Continue on the next page

C. Are any of your participants incarcerated?

○ YES - You must document the following information:

- ☐ 1. Is the study minimal risk? (it must be)
- ☐ 2. Research fits one of the allowed categories below
  - ☐ Causes or effects of incarceration
  - ☐ Study of prisons or prisoners
  - ☐ Conditions affecting prisoners as a class
  - ☐ Practices that may improve health or well-being of subjects
- ☐ 3. Are the risks commensurate with risks accepted by non-prisoners?
  - ☐ Selection of subjects is fair - controls random
  - ☐ Language is understandable
  - ☐ Study does not affect parole
  - ☐ If necessary, follow up care will be provided

Ø NO

D. Are children involved?

Ø YES - You need both parental consent form and a child assent form

- ☐ If the study has greater than minimal risk and no direct benefits, then you must show that the risk is only a minor increase above minimal, and it involves experiences that are commensurate with ordinary medical, psychological, social or educational situations

○ NO

Part 2: Project Abstract - Provide a brief abstract of the project

☐ I have attached a project abstract to this application

Part 3: Research Protocol

A. Describe study procedures

Describe study procedures with emphasis on those procedures affecting subjects and safety measures. Also provide script for telephone surveys.

☑ I have attached a description of my study procedures to this application

B. Answer each of the following questions

1. Specify sites of data collection

Southside Elementary School
12565 Brown Road
Denham Springs, LA 70726

Continue on the next page

2. If surgical or invasive procedures are used, give name, address, and telephone number of supervising physician and the qualifications of the person(s) performing the procedures. Comparable information when qualified participation is required or appropriate.

n/a

3. Provide the names, dosage, and actions of any drugs or other materials administered to the subjects and the qualifications of the person(s) administering the drugs.

n/a

4. Detail all the physical, psychological, and social risks to which the subjects may be exposed.

- Students will incur minimal risk through this research. Risk will only involve the normal level of risk a student is exposed to in a typical elementary classroom setting.

5. What steps will be taken to minimize risks to subjects?

- Student activities will occur in a normal school setting. Students will be performing student work that is typical for a fifth grade classroom.

Continue on the next page

6. Describe the recruitment pool (community, institution, group) and the criteria used to select and exclude subjects.

- The case will consist of my fifth grade English language arts class. Students are randomly assigned by administration.

7. List any vulnerable population whose members are included in this project (e.g., children under the age of 18; mentally impaired persons; pregnant women; prisoners; the aged.

- 5th grade students, ages 10-11

8. Describe the process through which informed consent will be obtained. (Informed consent usually requires an oral explanation, discussion, and opportunity for questions before seeking consent form signature.)

- Parents will be provided with consent forms during parent night where they will be explained. An English as a Second Language translator will be available for parents who are not fluent in English.
- Student consent forms will be explained in class and sent home in their graded paper folders.

9. (A) Is this study anonymous or confidential? (Anonymous means that the identity of the subjects is never linked to the data, directly or indirectly through a code system.)

(B) If a confidential study, detail how the privacy of subjects and security of their data will be protected.

- This is a confidental study. Student names and the name of their school will be replaced with pseudonyms. Student documents will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and on a password protected computer.

Continue on the next page

Part 4: Consent Form (Including Assent Form and Parental Permission Form if minors are involved)

 Please note: The consent form must be written in non-technical language which can be understood by the subjects. It should be free of any exculpatory language through which the participant is made to waive, or appears to be made to waive any legal rights, including

 For example consent forms and a complete checklist of required items, please refer to our website, www.lsu.edu/irb. Remember, **IRB contact information must be included** on the consent form!

 To waive signed consent. **IRB must be provided with the consent script** that will present the informed consent information to human subjects regarding the study/research. Also, note that waiving signed consent requires full IRB approval, which may delay approval of your study.

I am requesting waiver of signed Informed Consent because:

☐ (a) Having a participant sign the consent form would create the ***principal risk*** of participating in the study.

or that

☐ (b) The research presents ***no more than minimal risk*** of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which having signed consent is normally required.

Expedited reviews usually take one month. See our website for information about meeting dates. Carefully completed applications should be submitted three weeks before a meeting to ensure a prompt decision.

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

VITA

Ashley Renee Watson, a native of Denham Springs, Louisiana, received her bachelor's degree at Louisiana State University in 2004. She earned a Master's degree in 2005 and a Education Specialist degree in 2009 from Louisiana State University. In 2005, she began teaching school in Louisiana. She has taught second, third, fourth, and fifth grade over the past fourteen years. After the birth of her second child, she began pursuing her doctorate.